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THE MARRIAGE OF MOIRA FERGUS

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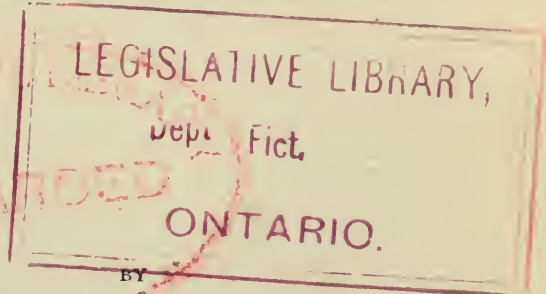
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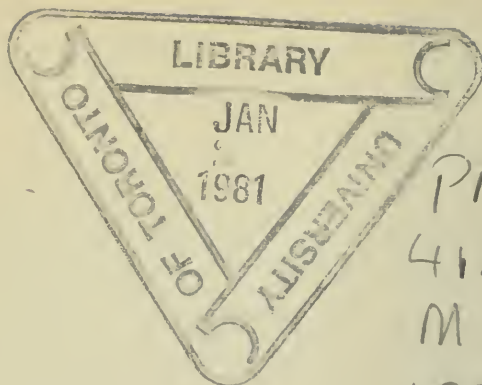
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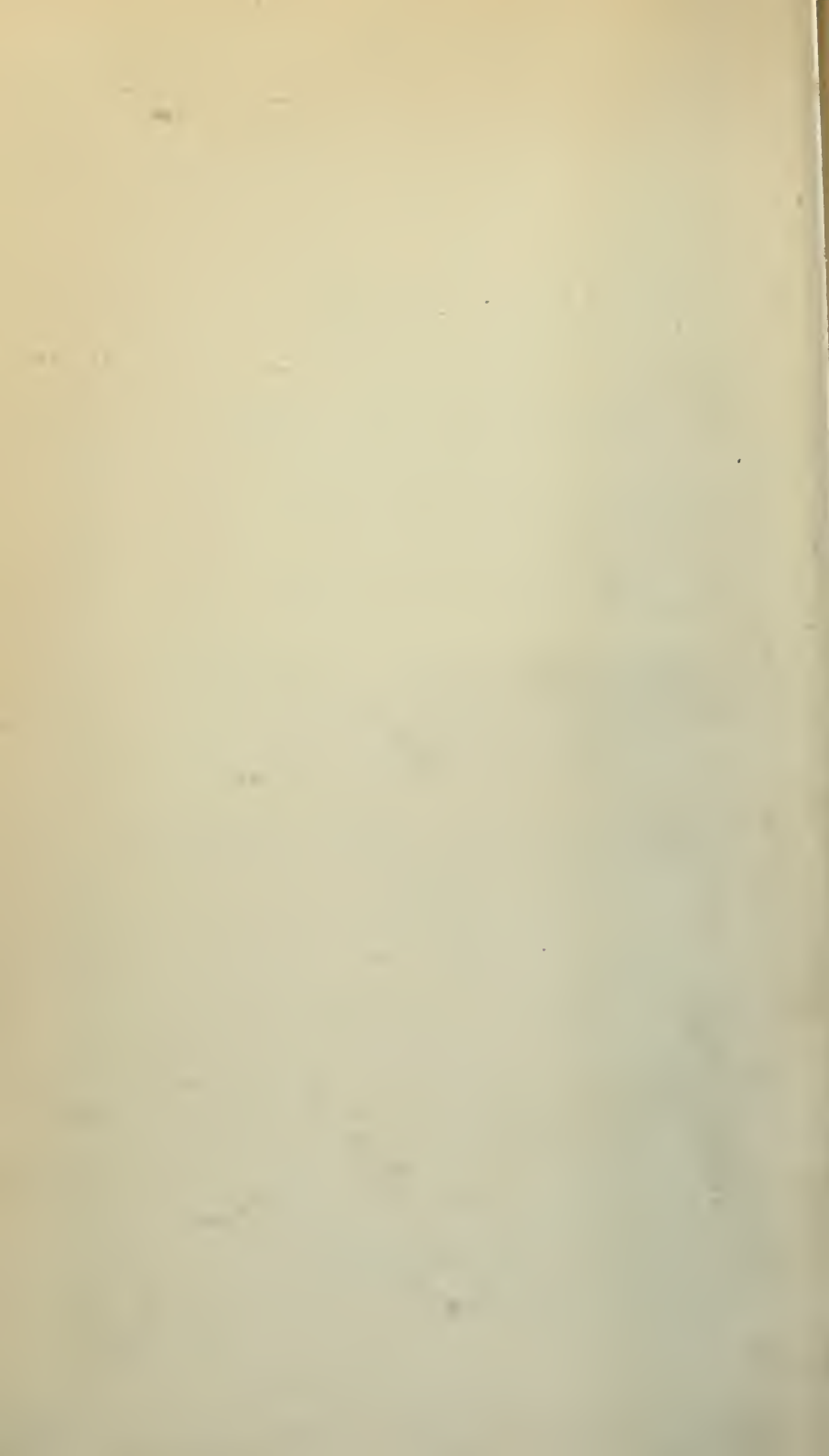
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# THE MAID OF KILLEENA.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE FIVE BROTHERS OF DARROCH.

“FAIR and fine is the Maid of Killeena. Her foot is light on the heather as the foot of the roedeer on Corrabhal; her eyes are bluer than the blue seas round Uig; when she speaks the valley rejoices. And she has no lover, the Maid of Killeena; her heart is as free as the winds of the morning; the young men are afraid of her laughing; they avoid the road to Killeena.”

Such were the phrases, mere echoes of Macpherson's Ossian, that were running through the head of a young lad who lay on the beach of the

far and lonely island of Darroch, in the Hebrides. He was dressed in rough, dark-blue fisherman's costume ; his hands and face were browned with the weather ; but somehow he did not seem to have the robust and hardy look common to the inhabitants of that rough coast. His face was pensive and sad ; his eyes large and thoughtful ; his limbs appeared slender and supple rather than thick-set and strong. At this moment he was regarding with an absent and indifferent look the sea before him, the islands that stood black in the pale colours of the water, and a large brown rowing-boat which was being pulled out through one of the channels to the open plain beyond. In that boat were his four brothers. He was to have gone out fishing with them as usual ; but he had forgotten the time and missed them ; and he had run down to this projecting point of the coast to hail them as they went by. For a second or two they hung on their oars, and seemed inclined to pull in for him ; but then he

could see his eldest brother, Duncan, turn round and address his companions with many angry gestures ; and presently the oars were dipped into the waves again, and the boat made out for the open sea. The young lad, Alister Lewis by name, lay down on the shingle, disappointed, ashamed, and wretched. His heart was not in the fishing, and every one knew it ; still it was hard that he should be left at home to mind the farm as if he were a girl or an old woman. But as he lay and dreamed of all these things, his fancy took him away to the neighbouring island of Killeena and to a small farmsteading there, where a mother and an only daughter lived. The daughter was Ailasa\* Macdonald—the Maid of Killeena the boy used to call her to himself—and his heart grew light in thinking of her. The picture he had before his imagination was really one to dwell with delight on ; that of a young girl of

\* The name is pronounced Aīlāsā. Alister has also the accent on the first syllable.

sixteen, graceful in figure, with light-brown hair that, unloosed, would have rippled down to her feet, eyes brightly blue and shaded with dark eyelashes, and a disposition as merry, and bright, and innocent, as ever cheered up a rude home. And that was a rude home enough—the small farmhouse of Carn-Slean, which was set in the middle of a moor, with a few fields reclaimed from the black peat-moss all around, and with but a scanty show of sheep on the drier uplands abutting on the farm. She had no lover, this Maid of Killeena ; but there was some one over the narrow channel that separated the island from Darroch who let his boyish fancies cluster around her in a tender and wistful fashion, keeping the secret, as he imagined, sacred to himself.

It was no secret, however, to his four brothers, the eldest of whom—a short, thick-set, hard-visaged man of fierce temper and passionate speech—was himself supposed to harbour some

wish that he might in a year or two get this bright young lass to be his wife. Duncan Lewis spoke angrily of his younger brother's visits to the farm of Carn-Slean. He never had any great love for the lad, who was ill qualified for the rough work of the fishing ; but sometimes he spoke of him with a sudden emphasis of hatred which startled the others. On this occasion, when young Alister Lewis came running down to the point, to hail the boat, the eldest brother had turned and said fiercely—

“ We will not go in to the shore for him—no, by Kott, we will not go in to the shore. He is no use for the fishing, not more as if he wass a child ; and he will look out for the storms with those teffles of eyes of his staring. Let him go to the farm. Let him look after the hens and bring the cows home. We hef no more use for him in the boat ! ”

“ But we hef got his fiddle with us,” said another of the brothers regretfully ; “ and



he is ferry goot with the songs and the stories."

"The songs and the stories!" said Duncan Lewis, with an oath. "Who will want to hef stories that will mek the ferry dead rise up in their graves? They are not goot songs for the middle of the night. His songs and his stories!—Let him tek them over to that lass at Killeena—she will hef his songs and his stories!"

"But it is you, Duncan Lewis, yourself," retorted the brother, "who would like to hef a word with Mrs. Macdonald's lass."

The eldest brother did not answer; he struck his oar into the water, the other oars instantly following; and then the measured throb could have been heard along the shores of these lonely islands, while a gloomy silence prevailed on board the boat.

Meanwhile, Alister Lewis had got up to his feet, showing himself a tall and well-made strip-

ling enough, though he had not the stalwart make of his brothers.

“I will go over to Killeena,” he said to himself. “I hef something to say to Ailasa.”

He walked along the shores of the island—the shingly beach of which soon gave way to stretches of fine wind-swept sand. He came to a narrow channel, on the other side of which was another island—darker and more rocky than Dárroch ; while the strait between had clearly a strong current running through it. How to get over ? There was not even a house within sight on these desolate shores. The lad coolly undressed himself, tied his clothes in a bundle and strapped them on his shoulders, then he made his way carefully into the water, and swam the channel. The water was pretty smooth ; but all the same the lower part of the bundle was considerably wet. Not heeding that much—indeed, he had calculated on it—he rapidly dressed himself again ; and began walking smartly up and over

the marshy green wastes of Killeena, until he reached a small farm set amid the black moorlands that had been cut for peat. An elderly woman was at the door, in the misty sunlight, spinning wool. One or two people—mostly old men, who had given up the fishing, but who still wore fishermen's clothes—were at work in the fields. There was no sign of the young Maid of Killeena.

“Yes, is it you, Alister Lewis?” Mrs. Macdonald said, in the Gaelic; “and have you not brought your fiddle to give us a tune? And are your brothers not gone to the fishing to-day?”

“My brothers have gone to the fishing without me,” said Alister, in the same tongue, “and they have taken my fiddle with them. I want to see your Ailasa, Mrs. Macdonald, for I am going away.”

“You are going away, Alister Lewis! And where are you going?” she said.



“I am going to Glasgow—yes, that is where I am going. I am not any use at the fishing ; and my mother and father they do not want me at the farm. It is a long way the way to Glasgow.”

“You will find Ailasa in the kitchen,” said Mrs. Macdonald.

Ailasa was raking up the peats—the fire was in the middle of the floor, with a chimney overhead going up through the thatch of the roof—with the intention of putting a big pot on the iron hook. She turned round suddenly as he entered—a bright look of surprise and gladness flashed into her face—and she said in English, “And iss it you, Alister, at last ? You hef not been here not for more as two weeks.”

‘No, I hef not, Ailasa,’ he said, casting down his eyes ; “and now I wass come to bid you good-bye, for it iss to Glasgow that I am going. It iss no use my being here any more ; and if I can get any work in Glasgow, that will be ferry well indeed ; and if I can go to the schools there

I will do that, too, for it iss not any great money you want to go to the college there, as Malcolm Ross he was telling to me when I will see him in Stornoway, and so—and so, Ailasa, I wass wanting to say good-bye to you before I go.”

“But you will not be for going to Glasgow all at once, Alister?” said the girl, with two big tears appearing in her eyes.

“It iss no use spending the time any more here,” the lad said wistfully. “I would write you a letter, Ailasa, from Glasgow, if you would like that, and if you would send me the news, that would be a ferry good day the day that I got a letter from you with all the news in it.”

“And are you going away like that, Alister Lewis?” she said; “and none of your friends to come and drink a glass to your good health, and not a word to any one of them? And it is only in half-an-hour that we will hef dinner, Alister;

and what is half-an-hour if you are going away to Glasgow ? ”

“ But you will not be ferry angry with me, Ailasa,” he said, rather shamefacedly, “ bekass it is a hard thing to go away, and I will not hef the spirit to say good-bye to them all—only to you, Ailasa, and to your mother ; and so good-bye to you, Ailasa, and it will be a ferry good day for me that day that you will send me a letter to Glasgow.”

Ailasa was now crying bitterly. She held out her hand ; and he, unable to speak, shook it warmly, and went away. Then, with some broken sentences in Gaelic, he bade good-bye to the old mother, and betook himself again to crossing the wild moorland on his way to the sea.

That night the brothers, who had only been out with the lines, came home late and rather dispirited. The take had been small. When in due course they sat down to supper, the old

father and mother included, Alister only was absent.

“I suppose he hass been all the day over with that lass at Carn-Slean,” said the black-haired Duncan, angrily. “He is better there than at the fishing. He will go to the fishing with us no more—by Kott, he will go with us no more.”

“You are right, Duncan Lewis, and it is a hard man you are,” the old mother said, beginning to cry. “He will not go to the fishing with you, not any more, for the boy is going to Glasgow.”

“And a ferry good thing too and mirover,” said Duncan, gloomily, “he will be ferry much better in a counting-house than at an oar ; and he will hef his fiddle when he likes, and his stories, and his books. ’Tiss a ferry good thing that he will be going away to Glasgow.”

“By Kott,” exclaimed one of the other brothers with a sudden vehemence, “if Alister iss going for to go to Glasgow, it iss not with empty pockets that he will go to Glasgow !”

“No, no !” cried the other brothers. “We will gif the lad something to put in his pocket ! By Kott, he will hef something to put in his pocket !”

And here the white-haired old father interfered ; and with many wise shakes of the head he intimated that he knew all that lay before a young man who was going to seek his fortune in a strange and distant city. . . Old Hector Lewis, to be sure, had never been out of the Hebrides, and had never seen any greater or more glorious city than Stornoway ; but he was supposed to know much more than most men of what was going on in the world. Alister would soon get a situation. He could be recommended to Mr. Macilwham, the painter and glazier, of the Gallowgate ; and though it was too late to apprentice him to that trade, Mr. Macilwham would surely be able to find an occupation for a young man who was learned in all matters of book-craft, handwriting, figuring, and the like.



“ I wass thinking he will not get much money for the writing of verses of poetry—that is a ferry bad trade,” said Duncan Lewis with some contempt.

“ But this is what I say,” said Nicol Lewis, the third brother, with unnecessary warmth, “ I say there iss not any finer lad in the Western Isles as Alister Lewis, and it will surely be a shame, and a great shame, if we wass to let him fight his own way in a strange town. And this is what I say, that if effery penny of my money that is in the bank of Stornoway will hef to go, if effery farthing and penny will hef to go, Alister he will be at the college, as sure as I am a living man, by Kott ! ”

And there and then the three brothers settled it, Duncan being the only dissentient. When Alister came in to supper he was pale and silent. He felt himself an outcast ; and that his brothers had reason to despise him for that he could not work in the boat as they did. He was conscious

that he spent his time in idling about the moors and solitudes—in playing his rude violin by the side of lonely streams—in reading books and studying algebraic puzzles that could be of no use to any one. So he came in and sate down at the plain wooden table, silent and ashamed.

“And where hef you been this day, Alister?” said Nicol Lewis.

The lad bit his lip and was silent; he did not wish to be laughed at.

“At Carn-Slean—that iss where he wass,” said Duncan Lewis, looking dark.

“That iss true,” the lad said at last. “I wass over at Carn-Slean—it wass to say good-bye. For I am going to Glasgow—it iss no use my being here any more.”

“That is a true word you hef spoken, Alister Lewis,” said his brother Nicol, in a kindly fashion; “and we are ferry glad you would think of going to Glasgow, bekass it is not many hass such skill o’ reading and writing as you; and it

wass Donald, and Hamish, and me, we wass sayin' there iss no great expense of the going to the college, and we wass saying that the expense—well, we will tek the expense, and it iss no great thing that we will tek the expense. And if you get a place in Glasgow that will keep you in your meat and your clothes, that wass ferry well whatever; but the college, it iss Donald, and Hamish, and me, we will pay for the college, and you will send us the letter, Alister, that will tell us all the news."

Surely the boy was not fit for the hard life of a fisherman—for at this moment, when he ought to have been glad of heart, any one could have seen that tears were running down his face. He rose abruptly from the table. He went to the small window—a single pane of glass let into the wall—and stood there for a moment or two. Then he came back, and held out his hand to each of the three brothers in succession.

"It iss a ferry kind man you are, Nicol



Lewis," he said to the last of them, "and a ferry good brother to me. And it iss not much of your money I will spend at the college; and when I can I will pay you back your money; but there iss more than the money that I thank you for this night, Nicol Lewis."

And so, some few days thereafter, Alister Lewis sailed in the steamer for Glasgow; and many thought they should see him no more in this world, considering that he had gone away to that distant place; but as for Ailasa Macdonald she had no such thoughts, and used, on the contrary, to sit of an evening and wonder what the great city was like and wonder, too, when Alister Lewis would grow to be a great and famous man and come back in pride and honour to the humble farm in the island of Darroch.

## CHAPTER II.

## NEWS FROM FAR AWAY.

THREE months went by before they got a letter. It was on the evening of a warm autumn day that Ailasa saw the solitary figure of the postman come over the level moors ; and in the distance—in the midst of the glow of rich colour that was shining over all the land and the sea—that humble official seemed to her to come like an angel out of a cloud of golden mist. She knew the letter had come at last. Fleet-footed as a young roe she ran to meet him, and she was too breathless to ask him the necessary question when she was face to face with him.

“ Oh, ay,” the shrivelled old man said, opening his bag ; “ it wass more as four times or six times

you hef come out to meet me, Ailasa, and you wass thinking I had a letter from Alister Lewis that is away in Glasgow. And this time you hef come the right time ; and there is more as a letter for you, there is a gran' big book, a ferry fine big book, and you will be ferry proud of it whatever. I hef not seen any such fine book since the wan that Sheila Mackenzie sent all the way from Borvabost to Mrs. M'Gregor's lad when he wass ferry ill wi' the fever."

"And if you would give me the book and the letter, John Cameron," said Ailasa, rather impatiently, "you could go on to the house and hef a dram."

So she got the letter and the book, and forthwith she sat down on the heather, leaving the postman to go on his way. It was a well-written letter—Alister Lewis had always been clever with his pen.

"Dear Ailasa," so it ran, "you will be expecting all the news from me this long time ; but I

would not send the news till I had the good news to send you. And now I can do that ; for I have got a good master, and a good master makes a willing servant, and he is very kind to me whatever. And I have been very busy with the night classes since I was come to Glasgow ; and I have been three nights in the week for my Latin to an old gentleman that I have heard was a Catholic priest many years ago, and he has classes for the young men that are going to college, and they are all very eager to go to the college. The Greek is at eight in the morning ; and it is very much easier for me to learn here than in Darroch, where there was no one to tell you if you were right. My teacher thinks that I will pass the examination ; and the junior Latin at the college it is early in the morning and my master says he will give me what hours I will want for my classes. Dear Ailasa, I have spent not one farthing of the money that Nicol, and Hamish, and Donald they gave to me, no not any

one farthing of the money ; and I am in hopes to keep myself at the college. It is a terrible place this big town—you cannot sleep for weeks after coming to it ; and it is very lonely you are. But I am very busy all the day, and have not much time to think of anything but the work of the day and my books at night ; and when I have a little time I go down to the river where the ships are, and I hear a little Gaelic among the sailors, and I see the big steamers going away for Oban, and Islay, and Stornoway, and then I think of all the people I know in Killeena and Darroch, and if I shall see them any more. That is all the news. If you would send me a letter with the news, that would be a great pleasure to me. I was thinking I would like to send you a book if you will take it from me ; but if you do not wish to take the book from me you will tell me about that in the letter with all the news. And I hope your mother is very well ; and I remain, dear Ailasa, your faithful friend, ALISTER LEWIS."



The young girl did not look at the book. She read and re-read the letter, and her face was full of pride and gladness. Had he not prospered famously in the far city, where they had already so far recognised the erudition he had picked up in Darroch that they were going to admit him to the great University? And he had maintained himself, keeping himself free from debt, and he a mere stripling. Ailasa drew a wonderful picture for herself of the young man's triumphant circumstances and prospects. She did not know of the dingy little room in the attics; of the breakfast, dinner, and supper of oatmeal porridge; of the weary hours of study stretching far into the night, and of the slow drudgery of the day in that shop in the Gallowgate.

Surely this evening was to be one full of wonders. Another figure appeared as if coming out of the sunset; what new stranger was this? A short, stout-built, dark-haired man came across

the rough moorland, and approached Ailasa in a somewhat shy fashion.

"I hope you are ferry well, Ailasa," said he, holding out his hand in an embarrassed way.

"Yes, I am ferry well whatever, Duncan Lewis," said she without any great concern. "And you will be for seeing my mother. She is in the house."

"I might hef come to see yourself, Ailasa," said he.

The young girl laughed lightly.

"To come all the way from Darroch to see me? That would be ferry kind of you, Duncan, if I could believe it. But my mother wass saying it will be a long time since we hef seen any of the Darroch people, and she will be ferry glad to see you this day—oh, yes, she will be ferry glad to see you."

The fisherman stood embarrassed and uncertain. He would like to have said something more; but he had been regarding the open letter

and the gilt-edged book lying on her lap, and angry suspicions were crowding in on his mind. So he suddenly left her, and went on to the house, where he found Mrs. Macdonald stirring up the peat-fire. She rapidly dusted a stool for him, and bade him sit down.

"It is a ferry fine evening this evening," said he.

"Indeed it is, praise God," she said, in the Gaelic; and thereafter they spoke in that tongue.

"It is a strange thing I am come to you about this day" said he, with his eyes on the ground. "I am the eldest one of my family. I have done well in the world, Mrs. Macdonald. I have more than 120*l.* in the bank at Stornoway.

"That is a good thing, Duncan Lewis," she answered. "You have kept off the drink like a prudent man. It is not every one has so much money in the bank at Stornoway."

"And it is time, Mrs. Macdonald," he con-



tinued, "that one of our family should take a wife ; and the eldest first, according to the old saying."

"Yes, indeed, the eldest first," she said, producing a bottle, a glass, and a plate with some pieces of oatmeal cake on it.

"And this is it, Mrs. Macdonald ; there is no lass in all the islands so good and fine a lass as your Ailasa, Mrs. Macdonald, and if she will take me for a husband it is a good husband I will be to her ; and I will come to Carn-Slean when there is no fishing and look after the farm for you, for you want a man to look after the farm at the time of the sowing and at the time of the harvest."

The Highlandwoman received this proposal in a calm and matter-of-fact way.

"Take a glass of whisky, Duncan Lewis, and drink to our good health—I do not touch the whisky myself. As for our Ailasa, she will be married some day, I hope, for that is good and

right for a lass, and I hope she will have an honest husband who knows how to keep off the drink like yourself, Duncan. But she is too young a lass to think of taking a husband yet. If she waits five or six years then it will be a good time to take a husband."

"That is fairly spoken," said the fisherman. "I will wait five or six years if Ailasa will promise to be my wife. I am not in a hurry, Mrs. Macdonald; but it is a good thing to know you have made your choice, instead of going to all places to look for a wife."

"Then you can speak to herself, Duncan Lewis; and here she comes," said the mother. "And do not forget to say that you will come and look after the farm when you have not to go to the fishing."

Ailasa came in, bearing her two treasures in her hand; and surely a brighter or prettier lass than this comely young creature could not have been found anywhere in these remote islands.

"Do you know I hef a letter from Alister

Lewis?" she said to her mother, "and a fine book, too, that is full of the pictures of flowers. And it iss a ferry good letter of news, for he is going to the college, just like Malcolm Ross."

"Oh, ay," his eldest brother said, with an angry look gathering on his face, "it is ferry fine for him to go and be a gentleman with all the money that Hamish and Nicol gif to him as if he wass no more nor a beggar's son, and it iss ferry fine for him to live on their money and go to the college."

"But it is a mistake and a ferry great mistake that you hef made, Duncan Lewis," said Ailasa, very warmly. "It is no beggar's son that Alister is, for he has not touched a farthing of the money; and if he had, it wass only a loan that he could give them back again; but he hass not spent no not one farthing of the money, and he iss no more a beggar's son as you are yourself, Duncan Lewis!"

"I am not a beggar's son," said the dark-

haired fisherman, his temper getting the better of his prudence. "It is more as 120*l*. I hef in the bank at Stornoway ; and when will he make that at the college ?"

"He will make that and a great deal very much more than that before a few years is over," said the girl confidently ; "and it is not money that is everything."

"Well, it is not right for us to hef a quarrel, Ailasa Macdonald," said Duncan Lewis, gloomily. "I did not come here to hef a quarrel. I wass saying to your mother that a man who hass money to tek a farm of his own should think of marrying ; and I hef told you what money it is that is mine in the bank at Stornoway ; and I wass saying I would come and look after the farm at Carn-Slean when there wass no fishing——"

"That is ferry good of you, Duncan Lewis," said Ailasa, with some surprise ; he was not ordinarily generous.

“But this is it, Ailasa,” said he; “you are a young thing, and hef no one to tek care of you if your mother wass ill. And I wass saying—I wass saying to your mother—that I would like to hef you for my wife, in five years, or four years, as might be, and that is the word I wass wishing to speak to you, Ailasa Macdonald.”

The girl looked more and more astonished, and then turned, as if for guidance, to her mother. Mrs. Macdonald had begun to peel some potatoes for supper, and was apparently not listening.

“To be your wife, Duncan Lewis? And it iss not any joke that you are making?”

“It iss not any joke at all,” said he.

“Then I cannot gif you my word back, Duncan Lewis,” she said simply. “Not in five years, or in four years—it iss no use your thinking of it all that time—you will get some other lass in Darroch.”

The man rose with a gloomy look about the dark eyes.

“That iss your answer to me, Ailasa Macdonald ; and it iss the last word you hef for me ? ”

“ Yes, it iss the last, Duncan Lewis,” she said ; “ but it iss ferry good friends that we may be although I cannot think of marrying you.”

He did not make any answer to that proposal. He bade mother and daughter good-bye in a brief word or two in Gaelic ; and then he set out to cross the Killeena moors. The shadows of night were gathering over the islands and the sea when he entered his own home ; but their blackness was not half so forbidding and ominous as the fixed and angry scowl on his face.



## CHAPTER III.

## AILASA'S PROMISE.

FROM time to time, at considerable intervals, news came of the young man in Glasgow, and it was good news. He was getting on well at college; his master was in every way considerate; he was ready to help him to some sort of work better suited for him. But at the end of each of those letters which Ailasa read aloud to her mother, the girl said to herself, "And why does he not come back to see his old friends?"

One day there was a great commotion in Darroch and Killeena. It was known that young Alister Lewis, who had been to the college, and was likely to become a schoolmaster, was returning for a few days to the place of his birth. And

Ailasa went down to the sea, and herself pulled across the narrow strait, and walked to the farm in Darroch to see if this was all true. True, indeed, it was ; for there was Alister Lewis himself coming to meet her.

While he was yet at a distance her heart grew cold within her. He was no longer the fisher-boy, in his rough and homely clothes, that had played about the shore with her, and got her the sea-birds' eggs. He was a young man now ; he was smartly dressed ; he seemed a stranger.

"Ailasa !" he cried, as he came near ; "and are you very well ? And I was coming over to Carn-Slean at this very moment !"

Somehow she could not speak. She turned aside her head, and began to cry silently.

"Ailasa," said he, "what is the matter ?"

"This is the matter, Alister Lewis," she said, simply, between her sobs ; "it is another way you speak now, since you hef been to Glasgow ; and I wass thinking it was no longer yourself



that I saw, but a stranger ; and you hef come back to Darroch like a stranger, and you will speak no more like us, and you wass be for growing ashamed of the people that wass your friends long ago."

"It is a bad welcome you will give me this day, Ailasa," said he, sadly ; "and it is hard words that you hef spoken."

They stood silent for a minute or two—silent and embarrassed. Then he said—

"Were you going on to the farm, Ailasa ?"

"I was coming only to see if the news wass true ; and now I am going back to Carn-Slean."

"I will row you across the water," said he ; and then the two walked down to the edge of the island.

He pulled her across the narrow channel, and moored the boat in the little creek.

"I can swim back," said he, with a smile, "if I have not forgotten the way of the swimming."

"And you will not come over to Carn-Slean and see my mother ?" the girl said timidly. "It

is many the night we will hef spoken about you ; and when I wass writing a letter to you, she would always say, '*Now you will put the good English into your letter, Ailasa, for Alister Lewis, he will be a great scholar now and he will be learning the good English.*' I did not know when I was writing to you, Alister, that—that——"

"That there was any change in me?" the young man said, indignantly. "Well, there is no change in me, but if there is any change it is you that are changed, Ailasa Macdonald, that you have forgotten your old friends. And maybe there are new friends," he added, with a sudden wild suspicion, "for a young lass has many to look after her."

The girl blushed rose-red.

"I hef no friends that I had not when you went away to Glasgow, Alister Lewis," she said, with her eyes cast down. "Who is it that would be for coming to Killeena? It is a very lonely life that we are living at Killeena."

“Yes, indeed,” said he; “and many was the night in Glasgow that I was thinking of you and of the farm, and of the hard life in the winter time. But then, I was saying to myself, that will not be always. There will be coming the young man from Uig, or from Harris, who will marry her, and he will take her away from the lonely life in Killeena, and maybe he will take her up to Stornoway, and give her a fine house there.”

“Then you wass ferry much mistaken, Alister Lewis,” she said, with some asperity. “There is not any young man coming from Uig, or Harris, or Stornoway, to do any such thing. And you would better hef been with your books than thinking such nonsense!”

“But a young lass must marry, Ailasa,” he said.

“There iss no need for that—there iss no need whateffer,” she said, proudly.

“Because, Ailasa, this was what I was

thinking," he said, with the handsome, fine face and dark eyes turned timidly as well as sadly towards her, "this was what I was thinking many a day and many a night since I went away from Darroch, that if there was none of the young men coming about to marry you, Ailasa, if there was no one at all that you were thinking of, that I would ask you, Ailasa, to be my wife some day, when I had some money gathered together, and wass ready to give you a house."

"And this is what I will say to you, Alister Lewis," she said, turning round to confront him, and yet with her eyes cast down and her face pale, "that if ever I marry any young man, it will be you yourself that I will marry, and no other one—that is what I hef said to myself. But I do not think I will ever marry you, Alister Lewis ; bekass when you hef money and you hef become a rich man, you will not think of a poor lass that wass living in Killeena, and that is what I expect, and I will not be angry with you when

you will not marry a lass that will bring shame on you bekass she hass not got fine clothes and does not know the good English."

"Ailasa, it is a bargain that you have made between us two this day," said he, paying no heed to her depreciation of herself.

And so they drew near to Carn-Slean, and they walked hand-in-hand, as they had often done in their childhood. They spoke little, but there was a proud and confident look on the young man's face. Mrs. Macdonald was warned of their coming by the sudden scampering off of a collie to meet them, and when she came out, she poured out in rapid Gaelic her praises of the alteration in Alister Lewis's appearance and would have him drink a glass of whisky in his own honour. The young man refused that friendly offer; but he sat down on one of the big stones by the door; and proceeded to tell Ailasa's mother, with an occasional stammer in his Gaelic, of all his adventures in Glasgow. She was



greatly disappointed that he had not seen the Duke of Argyll, nor yet Sir James Matheson ; but when he told her that his master knew the Lord Provost of Glasgow and several of the baillies and town councillors she regarded the young man with something of awe, and then, with the shrewdness of age, hoped that he would reap some practical advantage from even the remotest relations with those great people.

Then he rose to take his leave, after having eaten a piece of oatcake and drunk a glass of milk.

“ You will take the boat over the water, Alister Lewis,” said Mrs. Macdonald. “ And John Cameron he will bring it back in the morning.”

“ It is no use the trouble,” said Alister, “ it is many the time I have swam across.”

“ And with all your fine Glasgow clothes on ? ” said the mother, indignantly. “ That is indeed nonsense.”

“ Ferry well then, mother,” said Ailasa, who

seldom followed them into the Gaelic, "it is no quarrel there will be about the crossing, for I will go down and tek Alister across, and bring back the boat."

The young man was in no hurry to protest against her taking all this trouble. On the contrary he accepted her offer eagerly; and the mother thought him a prudent lad to think of his clothes.

"Ailasa," said he, as they walked across the moor in the twilight, "you will never forget that it is a promise you hef given to me this day."

"I will never forget that, Alister Lewis," she said, simply. "But if you forget it, that will be no shame to you, for it iss not every one that would come back from Glasgow to marry a poor lass in Killeena."

"A poor lass!" said he. "There is no such lass anywhere—not one in Glasgow, Ailasa, fit to wear your shoes. And you have grown half a woman since I left Darroch—in a year or two, if



you will wait so long, you will be the handsomest bride that has ever gone to a wedding in all the Western Islands. And it is nonsense you speak about my becoming a rich man ; it is far less you can make with all the college learning than at the fishing. It is a poor man you will marry, Ailasa Macdonald, and that is the truth."

"And there iss no fear for me in that," said the girl, "not if you wass as poor as old Sandy McKillop since they hef taken away his pipes."

He pulled the boat across the channel, and then surrendered the oars to her. It was nearly dark—the ripples that plashed against the boat struck white stars of fire—there was a strange glow over the northern heavens.

"Good-night to you, Alister Lewis," she said ; "and you will come over to-morrow to tell us more of the news."

"Good-night to you, Ailasa Macdonald," said he, holding her hand ; "and you will never forget the promise that you have made to me this day."

## CHAPTER IV.

## SOME FESTIVITIES.

So the time went by, and Ailasa Macdonald marked it no longer by the recurrent seasons, nor yet by the going away of the men to the Caithness fishery, but by the letters she got from Alistair Lewis in Glasgow. And each of these was more confident and buoyant than its predecessor; for the young man got on well at the University, and his master took a great interest in him, and some of the baillies and other great persons had been pleased to notice him, and had even hinted that they might use their influence in his favour. At last there came one letter, more important than all the others, and straight-way there was a great stir and noise of rumours throughout the islands.

“But I hef seen Ailasa herself, and she wass showing me the letter,” said Nicol Lewis to his eldest brother, who was angrily expressing his disbelief in the news.

“And it iss ferry well that he cannot write to his own people, but to a stranger lass that hass nothing to do with him,” Duncan Lewis said, gloomily smoking his pipe.

“And who will a young man write to, if not to the lass he is going to marry?” said Nicol Lewis. “And it is ferry proud Ailasa Macdonald is this day that he will hef done the great things in his classes; and who wass thinking when they built the fine stone school-house over at Maol-beg that it was our own Alister will come to be the ferry first schoolmaster, yes, and mirover. And he will hef the piece of land, too, and what will hinder him from keeping a cow? And I wass saying many’s the time that it wass no great harm to a young man to hef spoken with the Lord Provost of Glasgow, and the great magis-

trates, and they will see our Alister he hass a head on his shoulters, and he iss ferry right to say that the day he will come back to Darroch that iss the day he will come back to be married ; but the foolish young things to hef said it will be in the middle of the harvest, and a man will have to dance all night and go away to the shearing with his head full of the whisky, and not a half-hour's sleep for him betwēen, that wass ferry foolish ; but we will hef a good spree for all that—by Kott, it is the good glass we will drink when our Alister marries Ailasa Macdonald."

"It iss a very sure man you are, Nicol Lewis ; but you are too sure of that," said the other, rising and going away, with a dark look on his face. "It will be a bad glass you will drink when Alister Lewis marries Mrs. Macdonald's lass—a bad glass for her, and for you, and for him."

Nicol paid no heed to the words at the time ; for indeed he had grown accustomed to hear his

eldest brother talk in a strange fashion about Alister and Ailasa Macdonald. He remembered the words afterwards.

Meanwhile, however, there was nothing but joy and the hurry of preparation throughout the islands of Darroch and Killeena—and throughout one or two neighbouring islands besides—for everyone knew he would be asked to the wedding, and they were all busy in making up useful presents for Ailasa, and in sending to distant parts for the best whisky that could be got, just in case the bridal procession might come their way. The people were well-disposed towards the young lass of Carn-Slean; they knew her mother had not much money in the bank; and so they bought blankets, and made clothes, and set aside portions of their own furniture for her, and many was the visitor who travelled all the way to Killeena to ask the blushing Ailasa what she would like. Then, one day, came a letter from Alister Lewis, addressed to



Mrs. Macdonald, and the postman made her sign a receipt for that letter, much to her wonder. And inside there was nothing less than a parcel of £1 bank-notes—ten in all ; and Alister asked the mother if she would take that to help in buying Ailasa's outfit, when she went to Stornoway for that purpose. Moreover the young man had long ago sent back to Nicol Lewis all the money the brothers had lent him when first he left Darroch—he was clearly prospering in the world.

Then Alister Lewis came back to his native place to claim his bride ; and he was more than ever overcome with wonder and delight at the beauty of her bright and tender face ; and he was vastly pleased to see how smartly she was dressed ; while she, trembling, proud, and glad, dared hardly speak to him, lest he should think she had not as yet quite mastered the good English. And all the friends, relations, and distant acquaintances of the two families came over to

old Hector Lewis's farm in Darroch, seven days before the marriage, to celebrate the forthcoming event.

It was a great gathering. If Alister Lewis had been going to marry a princess they could not have made more stir. For they cleared out the barn, and put long tables into it; and Nicol Lewis made a wonderful chandelier out of spars of wood, and this was hung from the roof of the barn, with no fewer than twelve candles on it. Then for supper they boiled twenty fowls in the boiler used for preparing turnips for the cows; and such as could get seats at the board had the soup and the fowls placed before them just as if they were kings. Others were well content to have theirs outside, under the clear starlight, while they sate upon grindstones, or harrows, or even on the grass.

That was about eleven at night. Then all at once there was a wild skirl of pipes inside the barn; and presently all the people rose, and the



piper, playing "The Campbells are Coming," marched proudly down the middle of them, and came out into the night air, the great company following. Then when he had come outside the music was suddenly changed into a reel; and in the strange glow shining all over the midnight sky there was enough light to show the people how to form rapid groups for the dance. It was a great festivity. There was more than one guest there who had himself sent over a five-gallon cask of whisky to help the store; and there was no lack of the best Lagavulin from Islay or of the purest Campbeltown from Cantire. All the night through the sturdier members of the company—mostly married men and women—kept up the dancing with many a wild shout and hurrah, even until the day appeared in the east, and the sun began to shine out and over the sea. Then those who had farms near went off to attack the work of the harvesting; while those who had come from greater

distances lay down in the barn or in some empty cart to have a snooze before setting out to go home.

No one noticed that Duncan Lewis had absented himself from this gathering—no one but Alister, who was surprised and grieved. Next day Alister went to Ailasa and said—

“Ailasa, did you know that my brother Duncan was not among the people last night?”

“I did not know it, Alister,” she said.

“It is something hard he is thinking of us, Ailasa,” her lover said. “Now there is no one who can win over a man like a young lass; and if you would go to my brother Duncan, you would learn what he is thinking about, and he would be friendly with us again.”

“Oh, Alister, I cannot go to your brother Duncan,” the girl said, almost with a look of alarm.

“But why will you not go?” her lover said, startled by this look.

She remained silent—her face downcast, her manner showing great embarrassment.

“I hope it is no secret you have from me, Ailasa,” said he, reproachfully.

Still she would not answer ; and the young man began to grow proud and distant.

“If it is a secret you have,” said he, “I will not take it from you.”

She hesitated for a moment, and regarded him with an appealing look ; then, finding nothing in his face but disappointment and coldness, she suddenly exclaimed—

“I cannot hef you quarrel with me, Alister, and just before our wedding-day. There wass a secret—but—but there iss no wrong in it—it wass that your brother Duncan he did ask me a few years ago to marry him—that wass all. And now you will know why I cannot go to him with the message.”

“My brother Duncan !” the young man said, profoundly surprised, and yet finding in the cir-

cumstances an explanation of much in his brother's recent conduct towards himself. "And is he angry with you that you would not marry him, Ailasa?"

"I do not know," the girl said, simply. "Since that day he will not speak a word to me—not one. When I hef seen him coming along the road, he would go across the moor to be out of the way. It wass many a time I will be ferry sorry that I hef done him any harm; but that is the one thing a girl cannot do—to marry the man she hass not in her heart; and she should not be blamed for that."

All this set Alister Lewis thinking.

"He is an angry man, Ailasa, when he is crossed," he said; "and yet the people will talk if he does not come to the wedding. I will speak to him myself, and maybe he will come to the wedding."

Alister had no difficulty in finding out his brother, who was at work in the fields. He re-

monstrated with him for not having joined the festivities of the previous night.

“And wass there not enough to go on wi’ the drinking and dancing?” Duncan Lewis said, angrily. “It iss a good thing there is wan to look after the farm instead of filling his head with the whisky and going to sleep in a byre.”

“But there is not a wedding every day, Duncan,” the younger man said; “and there wass no need to drink more than you cared for. If you had come to the supper, there was a good bed for you at any time.”

“Ay,” said the other, scornfully, “it iss a fine thing to hef many friends, and much merry-making, when you gif them all the fowls about the farm and more whisky as they can drink. It iss a ferry good thing to hef friends who will tell you you wass doing a good thing in getting married to a lass that hass not a penny.”

“I hope you will come to the wedding, Duncan,” the younger man said, humbly.



“What for should I come to the wedding?” the other said, sulkily.

“The people will talk if you do not come; and Ailasa Macdonald, she is a good lass, and you do not wish to hef people say that you would not come to her wedding?”

“Do not ask me to come to the wedding, Alister Lewis,” said the other, going on with his work.

The younger man stood patiently there for a moment or two, wondering what sort of argument he could bring to bear. At length, in the incautiousness of youth, he blundered upon a dangerous remark.

“But this is what I think, Duncan,” said he, “that people will talk about you, too, if you do not come to our wedding. Yes, sure enough, they will talk; and what will hinder them saying you wanted Ailasa for a wife yourself?”

The man dropped his scythe, as if he had been shot. He turned and confronted his brother—

but on the face of the latter there was no expression of scorn. He was merely awaiting his brother's decision.

“Then, by Kott!” said Duncan Lewis, with a flash of anger in his black eyes, “I will come to your wedding. It wass you yourself, Alister Lewis, that asked me to come to the wedding. And if I hef no ferry fine clothes to gif the lass, and if I am not good at the dancing—well, that iss no matter, for there are many more who will be ferry glad over the wedding. But oh, yes, I will be at the wedding, Alister—you can tell Mrs. Macdonald’s lass I will be at the wedding.”

Alister Lewis was himself sufficiently quick-tempered and might at another time have resented the scornful way in which his brother spoke. But a man who is about to be married ought to be forgiving towards a disappointed rival; and so he went back to Ailasa and told her that his brother Duncan had consented to come to the marriage.



## CHAPTER V.

## AILASA'S WEDDING.

THE great day of the marriage arrived ; and at the earliest dawn the friends of the bride and bridegroom left their small farms and cottages to join the big procession. There were two processions, indeed ; that of Ailasa's friends, who had their own piper awaiting them at Killeena, and that of Alister Lewis's friends, whose piper was at Darroch. About ten o'clock these parties landed at different points on the great island adjoining—the mainland it was generally considered—and proceeded by convergent routes across the moor towards a certain small inn where the ceremony was to take place.

It was a beautiful morning—the air was sweet

with the resinous gale growing in the marshes, the sun shone brightly on the blue sea all around the islands. The people walked in couples, the piper at their head marching with his proudest step, letting his ribbons fly, and playing his most gladsome tunes. As they passed the solitary farms, the old and withered people came out to watch them with bleared eyes and give the young man a good wish; some would have had him take a glass for good luck, and he thanked them in such fine English, and he looked so handsome in his smart Glasgow clothes, that he quite won the old women's hearts.

Just before the inn was reached a wild cry of alarm was raised. Was not that the bride's party—a thin, bright line of colour far over the moorland? They could hear the faint sound of the pipes—it was Ailasa's party, sure enough, and shame would fall on the young man if she and her friends should reach the place of appointment first.

“By Kott!” cried Nicol Lewis to the company behind him, “it is you old ones you can stay behind if you will; but Alister and me we will hef a run to the inn, as sure as I am alive we will not hef Mrs. Macdonald’s friends be first at the inn.”

And they would have rushed on by themselves, but the piper swore a dreadful oath that the bridegroom should not go to meet his bride unheralded by music, and the old man set out running too; whereupon all the people followed him, with wild shouting, and laughing, and helping of the elder folks, until, sure enough, they were at the inn first, the old piper recovering his breath sufficiently to be playing a splendid strain when the young bride and all her people arrived.

There was a great greeting of friends, and everyone was looking at Ailasa, and her fine clothes that had come from Stornoway. Then she came forward to shake hands with them all; and most specially she came forward to Duncan

Lewis, and held out her hand. Alister Lewis had asked her to make friends with his brother, since he was coming to the marriage.

“And it is ferry glad I am to see you this day, Duncan Lewis,” the young girl said, shyly.

“Oh, ay,” said he, looking at her so that she turned her eyes away, “a young lass is ferry glad to see any one on her wedding-day. It iss a ferry good day for a young lass, the wedding-day.”

That was all he said to her; and presently they went into the inn, the central room of which had been cleared; and there was a great noise of talking, and a calling for glasses of whisky and pieces of bread and cheese, until the news went round that the minister had come. Then a hush fell over the assembly; and Ailasa, standing near to Alister Lewis, began to look frightened. The minister came into the room—a small, thin, white-haired, kindly-looking man, who looked as though he had been a fisherman

in his youth. There was a small circle cleared in the crowd ; and then the ceremony began. It was all in Gaelic, for there were many old people there who did not know much English ; and some of these old crones may have thought the exhortation exceedingly long, as they were standing all the time. But at length it was all over, and then the minister shook hands with the newly-married pair, and drank to their health a glass of whisky, which Nicol Lewis, with great courtesy, brought in on a plate. Then the pipes struck up outside ; and the people trooped out to the dancing ; while the old woman of the inn and her daughters began to arrange the tables again, so that the guests might have something to eat by and by.

The great festivity, however, was to be held at Hector Lewis's house in Darroch that evening, after which the young people were to go over to Carn-Slean, where Alister Lewis proposed to remain for a few days until the cottage attached



to the school-house of Maol-beg was finished, and ready for them. [So the people did not stay long at the inn. Shortly after midday, both parties joined into one great company, and both the pipers now led the way, the bride and bridegroom immediately following. And now the old folks who came out to greet them had something to gladden their eyes with, for here was the bride as well ; and it was a great favour if she would go in along with her husband to sit down by the hearth for a few minutes, while the company outside formed itself into eights, and danced reels and strathspeys with unabated vigour. In this fashion they got down to the sea again ; and here all the boats along these lonely shores had been brought together to take them across—all except Mrs. Macdonald's small rowing boat which had been left at the other side of Darroch to ferry the young people at night over to Killeena.

Seven nights before, as has been duly chro-



nicled, a great merry-making had taken place at Hector Lewis's farm, but it was as nothing compared to this merry-making of the marriage night, when even the most anxious had left their farms determined to have a good dram and a dance on so great an occasion. The supper was most sumptuous—there were huge salmon and many fowls, and such mutton as was fit to have been sent to the Duke of Argyll, or Sir James Matheson, or the Queen herself. Moreover, some well-to-do young fishermen, who had been many times to Oban, and Greenock, and other distant places, and picked up a great deal of knowledge there, had secretly brought over to the farm a basket containing bottles of wine. It was a great grief to many that Ailasa would drink no whisky at all—that when every man drank "*Shlainte!*" to her, she would only touch her glass, and shake hands with him, and then put it down again. But when this cunning young fellow brought out the wine,

it became known that the bride would drink a glass to her friends; and the noise ceased, and they all looked to her as she stood up, timid and rose-red, at the head of the table.

“I drink to your good health,” Ailasa said, “and it is a great happiness to me that you have come to my wedding.”

Then Alister Lewis said the same thing, and he, too, drank a glass; and there was a great noise of cheering and congratulation, with only one dissentient voice. That proceeded from Ian Ruadh—so named from his red hair—and this fiery-tempered and red-haired John called out in a querulous way,

“Why did she not speak in the Gaelic?”

“Be quiet, Ian!” said his wife.

“She should have spoken in the Gaelic,” he replied.

“It is a foolish man you are,” said one of his neighbours. “Would you have the wife of the new schoolmaster speak in the Gaelic, when it is

no Gaelic at all they will be for having in the schools ? ”

“ She should have spoken in the Gaelic ; I say she should have spoken in the Gaelic ! ” he repeated in angrier tones, and he would have risen up to protest, but that two of his neighbours laid violent hands on him, and forthwith ejected him from the door. When he reappeared some half-hour thereafter, he had recovered his temper ; but he still said it was a shame she did not speak in the Gaelic.

Now amid all the dancing and revelry that was going on it had been arranged that Ailasa and her husband, along with a few friends, should quietly slip away, and get down to the boat, and go over to Killeena. And in order to do this unobserved—so that the guests should not think they were slighted—it was resolved that those thus departing should leave in pairs, and that Duncan Lewis should first of all take Ailasa down to the shore. When Alister told his bride of

this proposal, which had originated with his eldest brother, he was surprised to see that she trembled slightly.

"What is the matter with you, Ailasa?" he said. "Are you afraid to go with Duncan for the few minutes, after he was fair enough to come to your wedding?"

"Yes, I am," she said. "I do not know why he will look at me in a strange way—I am afraid of him."

"But that is a foolish fancy of yours, Ailasa," her husband said; "and it would be very bad if you put a slight upon Duncan, now that he wishes to be friendly with you. And he has been very friendly all the day, and he says he is going to give us the black cow when you go to Maol-beg."

"Oh, yes, he has been ferry kind, that is true," Ailasa said; and then, after a pause, she seemed to pull herself together. "You say what is true, Alister, I hef no right to be afraid of my

husband's brother—that is ferry bad. I will go with Duncan when you are all ready to go over to Killeena."

In about half-an-hour thereafter, the word was given ; and whereas the people who were dancing outside or drinking indoors, believed that Ailasa had retired for the night, she was really slipping away from the back of the farm, accompanied by her brother-in-law. She was well wrapped up, for the wind had gone sharply round to the north-east, and the night looked blustering.

"It is a dark night this night," said her companion ; "you will mind your footing."

Ailasa did not answer ; the sound of his voice in the silence made her heart beat ; she grew alarmed that nothing could be heard of any of the others leaving the farm behind them. And yet she was resolved to show that she was not alarmed ; and presently she said in a cheerful way—



“It is a small boat to tek so many people over. They will hef to go over two or three at a time. And it is good work with the oars there will be, for the tide will be going out.”

“Oh, ay,” said he, “it is a bad night to tek many across to Killeena; and it will be all the less we will hef to carry over if you will go over now, and I will bring the boat back again.”

“Indeed, yes,” she said, eagerly, for she was glad to think that by this means she should be left on the opposite shore by herself; “and that will be a ferry good plan. It was a pity they did not bring round one or two of the boats during the day. But it is not much trouble there will be whateffer.”

The small rowing boat had been hauled up on the bank, where a sandy cove ran into the long grass and the weeds; but it cost Duncan Lewis little labour to drag it down, and get it afloat. The difficulty was in getting Ailasa into the boat with dry feet; for the sky was now wholly over-



clouded ; and the whereabouts of the water could only be made out by the plashing of the wavelets on the beach. At length, however, she got in, and went on to the stern ; and presently Duncan Lewis pushed off. But he had only pulled a dozen strokes or so when he ceased rowing.

“ It is a proud woman you are this day, that you are married, Ailasa Macdonald,” he said.

She did not answer him.

“ There wass others would hef made you as good a husband as Alister Lewis.”

And again she did not answer ; but there was something in the sound of his voice that struck a great chill to her heart.

“ Ay, ay,” said he, more fiercely, “ you will laugh at me—you two together—and you will say I wass a foolish man to think of marrying a young lass. It is a ferry good laugh for you to hef together ; and when the people will come to your house for a dram, it is a ferry good laugh you will gif them about Duncan Lewis over at

Darroch—that he wanted a young lass—but she passed him by for a young lad that wass at the schooling. And that is what you will do, Ailasa Macdonald.”

There was a splash on each side of the boat, and she uttered a timid scream as she saw the white fire in the water, for she knew these were the oars.

“Duncan Lewis,” she cried, “what are you doing?”

“What am I doing?” said he with a loud and harsh laugh; and she dimly saw that he was groping about the bottom of the boat; “it iss the two oars that hef gone into the sea; but this is what I am doing—that some one hass taken the cork out of the bottom of the boat—yes, when it wass on the bank—and, by Kott, the water is coming in fast, and you will hef to swim ashore, Ailasa Macdonald!”

For a second or two she was too stupefied to utter even a scream. She knew, in her speech-

less horror, that what he had said was true, for she heard the gurgling of the water; and at the same moment she saw his dark figure rise in the boat, and then disappear. He had jumped into the sea.

Some little time thereafter, a man, all dripping wet, was running across the marshy land lying between the sea and Hector Lewis's farm. He encountered three men about half a mile from the shore.

"Alister Lewis! Alister Lewis!" he cried, "it iss a bad night for you this night!"

"In the name of God, Duncan Lewis, where is Ailasa?" said the youngest of the three men.

"I wass taking her over in the boat—we wass not far from the shore—and the water came into the boat. It wass some one hass made the cork loose when the boat wass on the bank——"

"But where is Ailasa?" cried the young man, scarcely comprehending the story.

“Where is she? Ay, where is she?” said Duncan Lewis, clasping his hands over his head, apparently in an agony of grief. “The boat was sinking—I had to swim ashore——”

With a shrill, sharp cry, as of a wild animal shot through the heart, the young man rushed off in the direction of the sea. He could not pick his way on such a dark night; but he cared not whether he kept or missed the rough foot-path leading down to the shore.

“Ailasa! Ailasa!” he shouted.

The silence of the night was his only answer.

He reached the water—there was a mournful plash of waves all along the beach—out there nothing but blackness.

“Ailasa! Ailasa!” he called; and the men who had run after him they, too, called “Ailasa! Ailasa!”

Was it fancy, or a wild reality, that he heard a faint and distant voice call “*Alister!*”—not over there in the channel which he had been

anxiously scanning, but far away out in the west, towards the open sea?

Again he set out, rushing wildly over the patches of rough heather and broken rock close by the beach. Every second or two he would stand and call "Ailasa!" and then, with the strange fancy that he still could hear a voice faintly replying, he would rush on again. At length, he reached the extreme corner of the island; all around him were the dark and moving waters of the sea. He called aloud.

"I can hear her! I can hear her!" he cried, as if his heart were breaking. "And there is no boat to go for her! Ailasa! Ailasa! why do not you pull into the shore?"

"You cannot hear her!" said Duncan Lewis, savagely. "It is a madman that you are, Alister Lewis! The boat wass sinking when I swam in to the shore; ay, ay, the poor lass wass in the water; I could not bring her to the shore, for the tide it is ferry strong in the channel——"

He ceased abruptly ; for the young man, who had been gazing into the unknown darkness with a fixed and strange stare, suddenly heaved a short, quick sigh, and then fell heavily back on the beach, as one dead.



## CHAPTER VI.

“FAREWELL, MACKRIMMON !”

THAT was a wild night in Darroch. A great sound of lamentation arose when the news reached the wedding guests ; the women came rushing out to fill the darkness with their cries of grief ; the men, suddenly sobered, would search all along the shores—vainly groping about in the dark. There was no starlight to guide their search ; the skies were black overhead ; the wind came moaning over the bleak moorland, and the waves plashed mournfully and distantly on the beach.

“Ay, ay,” said one of the men, “it iss no use whateffer. The good lass is trooned—ay, ay, it is a bad night this night, and hersel’ jist married mirover.”

"Duncan Lewis," said another, "is not the man to leave a lass to be trooned if there wass a chance to save her ; but he couldna soom ashore wi' her, wi' the tide going down the channel. Ay, ay, it wass many a time I hef told Mrs. Macdonald she should hef a bigger boat."

"She wass a bad boat, tamn her!" said another, fiercely. "And there wass stones in her, too, for old Tonald Maclean he would try a sail wi' her—tamn her, that teffle of a boat! The poor lass—the poor lass! And where iss Alister Lewis?"

"Ay, ay," said one of his companions, "he iss out at the point. He iss fair mad about it, and he says that he will hef hear her cry to him, and that she is gone out to the sea. But it is no possible—for the boat would go down—ay, ay, the poor lass! the poor lass! And it wass a bad thing to hef the other boats away at the other side of the island—and the Lewis's fishing-boat, she is up on the sand, and they hef been working

at her for three or two days or more, and she canna be put in the water—and if she could be put in the water, what wass the use o' that ?”

Then it began to rain ; and when at last most of the people had wandered down to the point, they tried to persuade Alister Lewis to go back to the farm ; but he would not go. Duncan Lewis had gone to get dry clothes on ; and two or three of the young fellows had started off to walk to the other side of Darroch, to bring round the boats as soon as the daylight began to lighten the sky. Meanwhile this melancholy company stood out at the edge of the sea, in the slow and soaking rain ; and a great silence had fallen over them all.

Then they began to see each other somewhat more clearly. A strange blue light became visible all around ; and they could make out something of the coast and of the dark island lying out there in the sea. Slowly a pale grey

rose up in the east—slow and mournful—and they could see the pale grey sea, and the pale grey rocks, and the low-lying white mists that hung about the shores. So different was this morning to the morning that had ushered in Alister Lewis's marriage-day!

By and by, and far away in the distance, they heard the measured sound of oars; and here were some of the best oarsmen about the island bringing round two of the boats. What news did they bring? On their way they had found one of the oars belonging to Mrs. Macdonald's boat, which had been caught in a long and trailing mass of seaweed, and got drifted on to a small island of rock.

There was another burst of wailing when this news was told; for now it was clear that the boat had gone down, with the hapless girl who had so lately been made a bride. What was the use of putting out to sea? Nevertheless, in a hopeless fashion, Alister Lewis would get into one

of the boats ; and the young fellows pulled him out to the open waters.

A cold grey mist lay low over the sea, beaten down by the constant rain, and hung about the islands, too, so that their shores were scarcely visible. In all this wide picture of desolation there was no sign of life ; as far as they could see, with eyes well trained to pick out the smallest objects on the waves, there was nothing floating there.

“No, no, Alister Lewis,” said one of the young men, “the poor lass couldna hef drifted out to the sea, even if the boat wass afloat. For the tide would hef driven her on the Skeirmore rocks, and there wass nothing there when we passed.”

He did not ask them to go further ; and indeed they had hard work to pull back against the wind, though the tide was on the turn. When they got back to Darroch again, the people had dispersed along the shores, seeking for some trace of the sunken boat, but nothing belonging



to it, except the oar, had been recovered. Then they all went back to the farm, and sate down in silence ; until Mrs. Macdonald suddenly threw up her hands again, and called aloud, " My good lass ! My good lass !" whereupon all the people joined in her grief, the women rocking themselves to and fro, and saying with many sobs that there was no lass in all the islands so good a lass as Ailasa Macdonald. And this was noticed—that while the men, old men and young men, asked questions of Duncan Lewis about what had happened, he answered them with his eyes fixed on the ground, and never once lifted them to any one's face ; and of all the people there, Alister Lewis was the only one who would not ask any questions, but sometimes he stared in silence at his brother and at his downcast face.

What satisfaction could be gained from any questions or answers ? They had wakened the lad out of his bed who had last pulled across the small boat, and had examined him about



the cork in the bottom of that frail craft. He admitted that, during the day, finding the boat had been leaking, he and two others had pulled her up on the beach, and taken out the cork as the handiest method of baling her ; but that the cork was properly put in again was proved by his having subsequently pulled the boat over to Killeena and back.

“ Ay, ay,” said Duncan Lewis, eagerly, when he heard this, “ the cork was loose—ay, the cork was maybe loose, and I may hef kicked it out with my feet.”

“ And it is a liar you are, Duncan Lewis,” said the tall young lad, fiercely. “ For I hammered the cork in with a stone ; and how could you hef kicked the cork when it wass atween the spars ? ”

At this Duncan Lewis flew into a great rage, and would have laid hands on the boy but that the people held him back. There were one or two who looked at each other when, in the height

of his passion, he said he would not be accused for nothing.

All the following day they searched the shores ; and then they found the second oar—washed up by the tide on the Skeirmore rocks, where it had got hidden among the seaweed. They went round to the other islands, and sent messages to the fishing stations and harbours ; all to no purpose. They found out, indeed, that a small schooner from Watersay, in Barra, laden with herrings and bound for Stettin, must have passed round the outside of these islands just about daybreak on that fatal morning ; and on the mere chance of this vessel having seen or heard anything of a castaway, they gave due notice to the ports at which she might call. In course of time the message came back. The *White Helen* had passed outside the islands in question about seven in the morning, but had seen nothing.

Day after day thus passed in hope but not in

expectation ; for there seemed to be no doubt about the fate that had overtaken Ailasa on the very night of her wedding. Alister Lewis was a changed man. In these few days he had grown haggard and silent—he would speak to no one. He only walked round the shores, or pulled out in a boat by himself, as if he still expected to hear his name called ; and when, if by chance he came into the house, he saw Duncan there, he immediately went out again. The two brothers had not exchanged a word.

One day Alister sought out his brother Nicol, and said to him—

“ I am going away from Darroch, Nicol.”

“ And Kott’s will be done, and a ferry good thing too,” Nicol said, looking at the young man ; “ if you will stay in Darroch, Alister Lewis, it is a mad man you will be. The poor lass—ay, ay—what is the use of watching for her any more ?—and you are thinking you hef heard her speak—it is like to mek you mad—yes, it iss

a good thing you will go away and look after your school."

"I am not going to look after any school," said the young man, with a big lump rising in his throat, "that wass for Ailasa that I wanted to have the school. You would not have me stay in Maol-beg now, Nicol Lewis? There is no man could do that."

"And where will you be for going then?" said Nicol.

"America."

The elder brother uttered a cry.

"Then it is no more we will see you in the world."

"I will go to Glasgow, and tell the gentlemen that they will get some one else for the school; then I can get a boat at Glasgow for New York. There are some here who will be glad to see me no more."

Nicol looked at the young man, half afraid; and suddenly the whole look and manner of

Alister Lewis changed. A ghastly pallor shot into his face ; he clenched his hands ; and then he almost cried aloud—

“ Yes ! Do you know why it is that I am going to America ! It is this, Nicol Lewis—that if I live in this island another week there will be a murder here ! yes, as sure as I am alive ! ”

“ Alister ! ” the elder brother said, staring at him.

“ A murder—yes ! ” the younger man said, with a vehemence that seemed to border on madness. “ And maybe not the first within this month. ”

An indescribable horror was visible in Nicol Lewis’s face ; for this wild accusation was but the expression of many a strange and terrible fancy that had wandered before his own mind, and that he had striven to banish as the work of the devil.

“ Alister Lewis, what is it that you say ? ” he replied, almost in a whisper. “ What is it that



you think? For the sake of Kott, Alister Lewis, you will not say that against your own brother!"

The younger man had grown more calm—at least, he had sunk into a sort of gloomy taciturnity.

"I have said what I have said, Nicol; let it be between you and me. But I must go away from this country, for there is one in it whose life is not safe while I am in it too. That is sure."

No one but Nicol knew why Alister Lewis was leaving for America, most considered that he could no longer bear those scenes with which he had been familiar in happier days. The old mother wept over him—she knew she should see him no more. All his brothers went with him as far as Stornoway to catch the Glasgow steamer there—all his brothers except Duncan, with whom he refused to shake hands on leaving Darroch.



“I have left Duncan Lewis alive ; but see that he does not kill himself”—these were the last words spoken apart to Nicol by Alister as they stood on the deck of the *Clansman*, just before the great steamer steamed out of Stornoway harbour.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE “ PRIEZ POUR MOI, S.V.P.”

WHEN Duncan Lewis jumped out of the small boat into the sea, the sudden danger of which Ailasa became conscious did not deprive her of her senses. It was indeed with some sort of wild instinct of self-preservation that she immediately dashed down her hand towards the spot at which the water was rushing in ; and that she found in a moment, for she was as well acquainted with the boat as Duncan Lewis had been ignorant of it. She tore off the woollen shawl that she wore ; she stuffed one corner of it as tightly as she could into the small hole ; then she reached up her arm and took out one of the wooden thole-pins from the side of the boat.

This thole-pin had been extemporised that very day ; the rough bit of wood had been left much thicker at top than at bottom ; some portion of it was sure to fit. She hastily wrapped round it a portion of the other end of the shawl, withdrew that already in, and in another minute the whole was safely plugged.

Then she looked around.

A great terror seized her, and yet she did not scream. Where were the people ? She could hear no voices ; only the sound of the waves along the unseen beach.

Then she remembered that the oars had gone ; how should she make some despairing effort to get into land again ? She threw out the stones that were in the bottom of the boat ; she took the small tin can out of the locker in the stern seat, and baled out a portion of water, which was about a foot deep ; then she unfixed the rudder, and went to the bow of the boat, and tried to use it as a paddle, now on one side, now on the other.

But the work was hopeless. She had to stoop so far that her back began to ache ; then her arms grew so tired with the unwonted labour that she could barely move this heavy piece of wood ; and at length, wearied out and yet not quite aware of the peril that awaited her, she sate down on the middle thwart and began to cry silently.

A new sound startled her. The boat scraped against a rock. With a sudden joy in her heart she sprang to the side and reached out her arm—there was nothing there. She searched all around in the darkness—nothing but water. She knew now how rapidly the wind and tide combined were carrying her away ; and as the wild fancy struck her that that was the last point of the island that the boat had grazed, and that she was drifting out to sea, she rose and called aloud in her agony to her friends, and most of all to her young husband. Alas ! there was not even an echo to these wild cries.

She might, however, drift on to the Skeirmore

rocks ; and as the sea, with the wind off the land, was here comparatively smooth, she would be able to scramble over the seaweed to some higher place of safety. But she could not make them out in the darkness of the night. She sate, waiting in silence now, with a great dread stealing over her heart, listening for the sound of the waves on the rocks. At length she heard it. It made her tremble ; but yet it was welcome. She kept watching the water by the side of the boat lest she should be able to make out the first mass of stone or seaweed ; and she knew now that the point of the long and narrow island was near at hand. Still she kept her head down. The water was lapping all around the boat ; it confused her as she tried to listen to the breaking of the waves close by. Then she rose again. Was not the sound more distant ? She had gone by the Skeirmore rocks, and was drifting out to the open sea.

“ *Ailasa ! Ailasa !* ”

She started to her feet again. Was not that the voice of her lover, far away and faint?

"Alister!" she cried. "Alister! Are you coming for me?"

She listened again. There was another sound of "*Ailasa! Ailasa!*" but it seemed more faint, and how could she send back an answer against the wind? Nevertheless, despair made her try again; she called aloud from time to time, and listened; then, when she could hear no reply, she gave herself up for lost, and sate down in the boat, and could only cry bitterly that she should see Darroch, and Killeena, and her young husband no more.

So she sate through the weary hours, sleepless with her utter wretchedness, and yet sinking into a numbed state with the cold and the wet. She had sacrificed her shawl; it was now lying soaked in the bottom of the boat, one corner of it plugged in with the thole-pin. She heard no more the sound of the waves along the coast; the waves were



growing bigger ; she knew that she was out at sea.

Day broke, cold, and grey, and misty. The island that she could dimly see in the distance lay like huge black shadows in the white fog ; but the more she gazed at them the more she was convinced that these were not the Skeirmore rocks, with Darroch and Killeena behind. Whither had she come ? A sort of stupor was beginning to steal over her ; the pain in her heart alone prevented her sinking into the bottom of the boat, and letting the rain, and the wind, and the cold sea have their will of her.

She could not have closed her eyes ; yet it was with a start that she saw, far down in the south-west, a small vessel apparently coming northward. Faint as the chances were that they would descry so small an object as this boat in the midst of the fog and rain, the sight gave her new courage. She began to think of the ships she

had watched many a day go by this remote and lonely coast; might not one of them pick her up and carry her to some port from which she could make her way back to her own home? And yet if this help were long delayed she knew that they would find only a corpse in the drifting boat.

How slowly the small and shadowy ship came along! She gazed at it with such intensity that occasionally her head became giddy, and it seemed to disappear altogether; then with a quick anxiety she would rub her eyes and look again. It was a schooner. She stood up in the boat—and she had more difficulty now in balancing herself—and waved her handkerchief, looking anxiously all the while. Surely they must see her now! She watched the sails and the course of the vessel—her accustomed eye eager to perceive the slightest change in either. And there, sure enough, the schooner seemed to be slowly drawing nearer to her. She waved the hand-

kerchief again. She began to tremble violently. Then she sank into the stern of the boat, keenly conscious of all that was around her, and yet apparently incapable of movement.

It was a small schooner, but it seemed like the huge ghost of a dozen men-of-war as it bore down upon her through the grey mists of the rain. In a sort of dream she saw what the men were doing. She saw them shorten sail; then she heard voices; then the schooner hove-to, and the small boat was sent down. There were two men and a lad in it. They pulled towards her. They came nearer; and now the whole world seemed to be rocking and surging around her, and it appeared to her that she must struggle upward to save herself from drowning, and that she was powerless to act or to speak. They hailed her; she gave one loud cry; and then she knew no more.

When she came to herself she was on the deck of the schooner, and two or three men, weather-worn of face, were gazing at her in a wondering

way, and speaking to each other in an unknown tongue.

"I am Ailasa Macdonald," she said; "I live in Killeena. Will you put me ashore at any place that is near to my home?"

They shook their heads; and she saw they did not understand. But the skipper—a small red-faced man, who held a bottle and a glass in his hand—said to her—

"Engleesh?"

"Yes, yes," she said, eagerly.

"Vare, you, come?" he said, thinking of each word as he pronounced it.

She pointed over to the distant coast, now almost invisible in the fog.

"No wreck? No boat down?" he said, supplying with abundant gestures the missing words.

"You come out—lost?"

"Yes, yes!" she said. "Can you take me ashore?"

He shook his head.

“Take you—there! Non! Not possible. You rest here—a boat he come back—you take the boat, yes?”

They were all regarding the beautiful young girl as though she had dropped from the skies; and yet there was nothing rude or unkindly in their gaze. One of the crew came forward with some brandy in a cup; she shuddered and refused it; but he pressed her to take it so urgently that she sipped some. Then the captain touched her dress.

“Ferr bad—ferr bad!” said he, shaking his head; for her clothes were soaking wet.

He turned to the sailors and had some consultation with them in this unknown tongue. Then he motioned her to follow him; and although she guessed they were French, and knew that the French were not liked by the fishermen of her coast, still she had no fear of seafaring folk, and she followed him bravely.

He took her to the door of his own cabin, and



pointed inside. He showed her the bolt ; and when she hesitated, he said, with vehement gesture—

“ No ? Why no ? Forr you—it is forr you. Go there, and me come back—you shall give the dresses by this way—they go to dry by the fire, yes ? Why no ? You are afraid ? Mon Dieu, see ! ”

He showed her the bolt again ; and there was a proud and hurt look in his face that gave her more courage than any voluble protestations could have done. She went inside the small cabin—it was not small in her eyes, accustomed as she was to the resources of much smaller craft than a French schooner—and made herself quite at home there. The sailors treated her with the greatest thoughtfulness and kindness. The boy whom she had seen in the small boat was sent to the door of the cabin to wait for her wet clothes ; he brought her some coffee and biscuits ; he brought her, too, abundant coverings for the hammock, and though he could not



speaking a word, his big black eyes and browned hands showed her what to do. Then having partaken of this frugal but comforting meal, she bolted the door of the cabin, she rolled herself up in the warm clothes, and, tired, cold, and heart-sick beyond measure, sank into a deep sleep.

When she awoke, her clothes were thoroughly dried; and she knew the difficulty they must have experienced in drying a woman's clothes on board a boat. When she had dressed herself she went on deck; and it seemed to her that she had entered upon a new life. Surely she had passed through the agony of death and left all her old friends and associations behind. For now it was clear midday; and the sun had rolled back the rain-clouds to the horizon; while far away across the blue sea a pale tall white object at the very extremity of the land, caught the sunlight and shone over the dark coast.

"It is the Butt of Lewis!" she cried in dismay.

"Lewis? Yes, yes, yes!" the small, red-faced, shrewd-eyed captain said.

Ailasa turned to him with terror in her face.

"And where do you go to now? You wass saying you would put me in a boat to tek me back."

He shrugged his shoulders; she had been speaking too quickly for him.

"Cannot you tek me back? Cannot you tek me back?" the girl cried wildly. "There is many a one that will pay you for the time—or if you will tek me only to the Lewis, and I will get back to Killeena. My friends they will all think I am dead now; and it wass only yesterday that they came to the wedding. And my husband, Alister, he will think that I am dead now!"

But these urgent protestations were lost on him. He shook his head. He could not understand her when she spoke like that.

"Listen," he said to her; and then he began,

in a slow and careful fashion, to deliver the speech that he had word by word prepared while she lay asleep in the cabin. “This boat is the *Priez Pour Moi, S’il Vous Plait*; me, captain. We haf coaffee, vine, flour. We go to Iceland—bring back the salt feesh to Bordeaux. We go, we come back, you see? Ferr vell. You rest here; we see the ship you desire; you go wis her to English place—good?”

“You are going to Iceland?” she said.  
“Wass there any English ships there?”

He shook his head.

“No—not many Engleesh—one perhaps. But here, on the sea, many Engleesh ships—we shall look—then you go back. But why you are in grand distress?”

“I hef no right to be,” she said, sadly, and almost to herself. “You are ferry kind to me—kinder than my own kith and kin, that tried to murder me. And what hef I done that any one would try to murder me?”

And so the small vessel sailed away to the north ; and the girl sate and watched for the ship that was to take her back to her own country. That day they saw no fewer than five ; but all of these the sailors told her would be of no use to her. When she looked disappointed, the small captain would ask her if she would rather go to America than to Iceland.

Bit by bit, as she found out how to make him understand her, she told him her story ; and the man's face grew dark.

"He try to kill you !"

"I do not know," she said. "I hef wished not to believe that ; but I cannot help it, and he wass my own husband's brother. It was a fearful night that night ; and what are they all doing now ? All going round the shore looking for me ; or hef they gone away to the farms, thinking that I wass drowned, and Alister only he will be looking for me, out by the shores of

Darroch, where I was hearing him cry to me  
'*Ailasa ! Ailasa !*'"

The further north they got, the more rarely they caught a glimpse of any distant vessel near the horizon ; and by and by Ailasa resigned herself to going on with them to Iceland. Captain and crew were alike exceedingly kind and attentive to her. The cabin into which she had been at first ushered was reserved for her exclusive use. Such delicacies as the ship's stores afforded were prepared for her—indeed, she had been accustomed to considerably rougher fare in the rude islands of the Hebrides. And again and again she besought the captain—sometimes with tears in her eyes—to express to the men her gratitude to them for their kindness ; and as for himself, she would leave it to her husband Alister Lewis to take the proper means of thanking him when she got back to her own home.

But another bitter disappointment was in store for her. After the long and tedious voyage that



seemed to be carrying her beyond the confines of the known world, they saw the land at last; and when in course of time they sailed into the small port of Reykjavik, she looked forward with great joy to meeting some of her own countrymen, who would take her back to Wick, or Stornoway, or even Greenock. There was not a single British vessel of any description in the harbour. She cried silently; but she hid her tears; for she was ashamed to show apparent ingratitude to those who had done so much for her.

"You rest here—small time," said the captain, cheerfully. "We get the feesh, then we sail. Then you shall find many Engleesh ships, much many Engleesh ships, when we go back—hundreds Engleesh ships that go to Glasgow."

"To Glasgow," she repeated, mechanically. Should she have to go to that distant city of which she had heard—of which she had dreamed many a time in reading Alister's letters to her?



All that she knew of the place was the address of the shop in the Gallowgate to which she had sent her letters in reply.

“Haf you money?” said her friend the small captain.

“No, not any,” she said.

“You want money, oh yes,” he said, “when you go to Glasgow, Greenock, or the other harbour, for you to go home. Here some money. Pay me back in a letter.”

He took out a well-worn leather purse, on the outside of which were large initials worked in gold beads.

“My vife,” he said, with a proud smile, “my vife do that—yes. Here some money forr you.”

He offered her three napoleons, which she took. But meanwhile she had quickly undone from round her neck the chain to which was attached a small and pretty silver watch that Nicol Lewis had bought for her in Stornoway.

Both of these—while she was too much confused to speak—she offered to him.

"What is that?" he said with a sudden frown.

"It iss a present," she said timidly. "You hef been very kind to me."

"Non!" the French captain said, with angry vehemence. "Take away! No present forr me!"

He looked at the young girl—at her frightened and imploring face: then he shrugged his shoulders, and laughed.

"Be not afrait!" he said, motioning back her hand. "It is no matter. I am not angry. You air only a child."

## CHAPTER VIII.

“AS WE RODE IN BY GLASGOW TOWN.”

IN due course of time the small French schooner had taken in her cargo of salt-fish ; the period of waiting having seemed innumerable ages to the young Highland girl. Then they set sail once more, and there was not any one of the seamen kept a better look-out than she did. And they were more fortunate on their voyage south ; for before long they fell in with a home-ward-bound steamer, the captain of which willingly took Ailasa on board. He would carry her to Glasgow, where she would take steamer for Stornoway—that was the best he could do for her.

“ You hef been a ferry good friend to me,”

said Ailasa to the captain of the French schooner, while tears were running down her face, "and I will not know at all how to thank you; but it iss my husband that will write to you; and if you wass coming any day into Styornoway or to Vatersay, or to Borva, and you wass sending a message to Carn-Slean in Killeena, or to Darroch, or to the school-house at Maol-beg, there iss many and many a one that would be glad to go a long way to see you. Yes, and there will be many and many a one will be a friend to you, if they wass never to see you, and I will say that it iss a good friend you hef been to me."

Ailasa stood on the deck of the big steamer as it went throbbing on its way. She did not know that she was an object of great curiosity to the passengers on board, for she was still regarding the small vessel that was being left behind, and waving her handkerchief to the good friends whom she was little likely to see again. Then

she turned to find herself among a new set of strangers.

The captain of the steamer was a tall, burly, white-haired Scotchman, who talked in a bluff fashion that rather frightened her, but who was very kind to her all the same. And when on the next afternoon they sailed up the Clyde and got near to Glasgow—the girl was quite bewildered by the din of the dockyards and the sight of such great crowds of people—he said to her,

“Now, my lass, it winna do for ye to gang about the streets o’ a big town; and I’m telled that the Stornoway steamer doesna sail the morn’s morning, but the day after. Hae ye got any siller about ye?”

She showed him the three gold pieces, which he regarded with much contempt.

“Gie them to me,” he said, “and I’ll get ye something mair serviceable. Now take heed o’ what I’m saying. I’ll send one o’ my men to put

ye into a cab, and ye'll drive to that shop in the Gallowgate—do ye understand? Then ye'll tell Mr. Macilwham—and God forgie him for having such a name—wha ye are, and your belongings, and he'll put you in the way o' getting a comfortable lodging. And I'll lend ye a bag to put the bits o' things in that the leddies have given ye; but mind ye let me have the bag back again, for it doesna belong to me."

It was as one in a dream that Ailasa found herself in the great city of which Alister Lewis had often written to her. Surely there was nothing here of all that she had imagined. When she stepped on to the quay at the Broo-mielaw, the noise of the place terrified her; and she could only stare in a frightened fashion at the enormous masses of houses, and the wonderful streams of men and women, and the strange vehicles in the streets. The sailor who was in charge of her treated her as if she were a child. He took her hand to lead her up to the cab,



seeing that she almost shrank from venturing out into the street. Then he got on the box beside the driver, and they drove away.

What hideous roar and rattle was this that filled her ears? The great gaunt lines of houses seemed to have no end. She saw crowds of people such as she had scarcely imagined to exist in the whole world: and all at once, recollecting that she was alone in this vast multitude, knowing none and known to none, her courage fell away from her; it seemed to her that she was now as lost and forlorn as she had been that wild night out at sea, and that she should never see Alister Lewis, or her mother, or Killeena any more. The endless streets were blotted out by her tears. She thought no more of the size of the place, except that it seemed to her she was plunging deeper and deeper into an inscrutable and terrible wilderness, from which there could be no escape. When, at length, the vehicle stopped, and the

sailor came down to ask her to alight, she stepped out on the pavement with a look on her face as of a bird that suddenly finds itself in the hands of a snarer. The very skies and the free light of Heaven seemed shut out in the heart of this fearful city.

"Aye, my good lass, this is the shop," said the Scotch sailor; "dinna ye see the name ower the door?"

She timidly crossed the pavement.

"Here," said the man, "take your bag wi' ye, and mind what Captain MacIntyre telled ye. And I'll say good day to ye, and wish ye a quick passage back to Stornoway."

She was so bewildered that she could only thank him vaguely; then she went into the shop.

It was a strange place. There was no one at all in the front portion of it; and behind, in the gloom, she could see another large apartment, filled with large frames, and sheets of glass, and gilded decorations. It seemed hopeless to her

to ask here for news of Alister Lewis ; she could not believe now that this city in which she found herself was the Glasgow of which she had heard him speak.

But as her eyes got accustomed to the twilight she saw there were two dusky figures coming along through that lumber of window-frames and gilded mirrors ; and as they came they spoke.

“ The morn’s mornin’ ? ” said the elder of the two, who was in front. “ Weel, I’m sorry to see the last o’ ye, lad. But twa or three years will make ye forget what ye’ve come through. At seeven is it that ye sail ? ”

“ Yes, indeed,” said the younger man.

The sound of the voice thrilled through her, and she would have run towards him but that the whole place seemed to reel round. She caught at the counter beside her ; she vainly stretched out her other hand towards him : she could neither speak nor cry.

And then it seemed to her, before she sank into unconsciousness, that Alister Lewis turned a white and haggard face towards her, and that a wild cry of terror escaped from his lips as he gazed at her, trembling and irresolute. She could not help stretching out both hands to him—she said, "Alister, dinna ye know me?"—and then, as she fell, she knew that his arms were round her, and he was calling to her, and caressing her, and speaking to her as to one who had come back from the grave to delight and astonish those she had left behind.

"*Ailasa! Ailasa!*"—she heard the words faintly and distantly, as she had heard them that night off the Skeirmore rocks, and when at last she came to herself, that was all he could murmur into her ear, as he held her fast, so that the strange vision should not melt away and escape from him.

"Ailasa, my lass, where hef you been? Where hef you been, Ailasa?" he said. "I

was never thinking to see you again in the world. It was the morn's morning I was going away to America. Ailasa, why dinna you speak to me ? ”

But here Mr. Macilwham, a quiet, little, grey-faced old man, who frowned because that his eyes were wet, came forward and interposed in a rough manner.

“ Alister,” said he, “ have ye no sense, man ? Let the lass alone ! Ye'll have plenty o' time to ask her questions afterwards, and jist now, why, bring the lass into the back shop and we will get her some tea, and Mrs. Macilwham will come ower and see that she is put to rights. Come along, my girl. Dinna ye bother your head wi' questions. It is a very gran' thing ye are safe and sound ; and there's plenty o' time for the askin' o' questions. Alister, my man, jist you run across the street and bid the gudewife mak haste and step this way. Come along, my lass ! ”



That evening Ailasa sat in a little parlour in the Gallowgate, made very comfortable by the ministrations of the glazier's wife, and looking pleased and contented amid all the wonders and novelties of such a place. And Alister Lewis, who could not keep his eyes away from his young wife, who seemed to have come back to him, pale and beautiful, from the very realms of death, showed her a letter which he had just received from Darroch. It was from his brother Nicol, and this was one passage of it:—"God knaws I hef nothing to blame myself, but how wass I to speak to him, Alister, when you wass tell me that fearful thing at Stornoway? And the people, too, they was saying things mirover, and he wass not a blind man; and from one day to the other he was seeing that no one would go near to him, and him a ferra proud man whatever. And it wass bad and ferra bad for us to have this great shame on our family; and Hamish and Donald they would say not one



word ; but every one he would know that the people wass thinking more as they would say. This was ferra strange, too, that he wouldna gang down to the sea, although the boat she wass wantin' the pentin and he wouldna gang down to the sea, but he wass keepin' about the farm from the mornin' till the night. Well, well, Alister, there wass many a one thinking he would go away from Darroch, but there wass no one thinking he would throw himself into the water, and it is a bad thing to hef a drooned man in the family when you go to the fishing, and him drooned by his own hand. And it iss two of the family gone away now ; and Mrs. Macdonald she will be for leaving Carn-Slean—and Ailasa away, too, there will not be much of a song or a dance about Darroch or Killeena for many's the year that is to come."

And so the letter went on, and Ailasa trembled and wept by turns to think of the desolation that had fallen over her home.

"But it will be a happier time, Ailasa, when you go back," Alister Lewis said, gladly enough, as he put his hand on the girl's shoulder, and patted her; "and it will be a great surprise to all the people when they see us together—as if you were come back from another world to them—and there will be many a good song and a dance yet in the islands all in good time. And that day will be a good day that you will go over the moor to Carn-Slean, for there was no one ever thinking you would see Carn-Slean again. But you were saying, Ailasa, you will rather send them a message by the steamer, and that is very good, that they will not be frightened, and you will stay for a week or two to see the fine sights of Glasgow."

"Oh yes," said Ailasa, with a happy light shining in her blue eyes; "there iss many a thing I will like to see in Glasgow that they hef not heard of in Darroch or Killeena; and it will be a proud day the day that I will go back to

Killeena and tell them all the fine things that I hef seen. And maybe," said the girl shyly, remembering her duty as a schoolmaster's wife, "maybe I will learn a little of the good English before we go back to Killeena."

# THE MARRIAGE OF MOIRA FERGUS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MOIRA SEEKS THE MINISTER.

It was a grey day ; the skies were clouded over ; the Atlantic was wild and rough ; the rocky islands along the coast looked black in the driving sea. A young girl, with her shawl wrapped round her head and shoulders, had come all the way across the island of Darroch to the Free Church Manse on the western side, and now she timidly tapped at the door. She was a quiet little Highland girl, not very pretty, perhaps ; she was fair, freckled ; and wistful of face ; but

she had a certain innocence and "strangeness" in her blue eyes that pleased people. Her name was Moira Fergus—Moireach Fearghus some would have spelt it ; and she was the eldest of a family of five, who all lived on the eastern shores of Darroch with their father, John Fergus.

She tapped at the door, and a stalwart middle-aged woman answered.

"Ay, iss it you, Moira, that I see here this day ? and what will you be wanting to say to the minister ?"

The girl seemed frightened ; but at last she managed to say that she wanted to see the minister alone. The Highland woman regarded her with some suspicion ; but at length asked her to come in and sit down in the small parlour while she would go for Mr. MacDonald. The girl went into the room ; and somewhat nervously sat down on one of the chairs. For several minutes she remained there alone, looking in an absent way at the big shells on the

mantelpiece, and listening vaguely to the roar of the sea outside.

Then Mr. MacDonald appeared—a small, thin, red-faced Celt, not very careful as to dress, and obviously partial to snuff.

“Kott pless me—and you, too, Moira Fergus,” said he. “And it wass no thought of seeing you that I had this tay. And wass there anything wrong now with your ffather, that you hef come all the way from Ardtilleach?”

“No, Mr. MacDonald, there iss not anything the matter with my father,” said the girl, nervously working with the corner of her shawl. “There iss not anything the matter with my father,—but—but—you know, Mr. MacDonald, that it is not every one that can get a smooth word from my father.”

“A smooth word?” said the minister. “And indeed it iss your father, Moira, that iss the angriest man in all the islands, and there iss no sort of holding of his tongue. There are other



men—ay, there are other men—who will be loose of their tongues on the weekdays, and they will speak of the teffle without much need of it—and what iss the harm, too, if you will tam the teffle when you speak of him, and it will come to him all in good time ; but to tam other people, and on the Sabbath, too, that iss a very tifferent matter. The teffle—well, he is tammed whateffer ; but how can you know that Mr. Ross of Styornoway, or Mr. Macleod of Harriss iss in the black book ? But I will say no harm of your father, Moira Fergus.”

And, indeed, Mr. MacDonald had some cause to be silent ; for—always excepting on Sundays, when he proved himself a most earnest and faithful shepherd—he was himself given to the use of strong language and a little strong drink. He was none the less respected by his flock that occasionally he worked himself into a passion and uttered phrases that would have driven the Free Church Synod into fits. On the Sundays, how-

ever, he always had a clean shirt, would touch no whisky, and made use of no vehement language—unless that vehemence appeared in his Gaelic sermons, which were of the best of their kind.

“Oh, Mr. MacDonald,” the girl suddenly cried out, with a strange pleading in her eyes, “you will be a frient to me, and I will tell you why I hef come all the way from Ardtilleach. It wass Angus M’Eachran and me—you know Angus M’Eachran, Mr. MacDonald?—it was Angus M’Eachran and me—well, we were thinking of getting married—ay, it iss many a day since he hass talked of that—”

“Well, well, Moira, and what more? Is there any harm in it that a young man and a young lass should think of getting married?”

The girl still kept nervously twitching the corner of her shawl.

“And there iss many a time I hef said to him, ‘Angus, we will get married some day; but what

for should we get married now, and the fishing not very good whateffer?' And there is many a time he hass said to me, 'Moir, you hef done enough for your father and your father's children, and if he will not let you marry, do you think, then, that you will neffer marry?'

"Your younger sisters must be growing up, Moira," the minister said.

"And the days went by," the girl continued, sadly, "and the weeks went by, and Angus M'Eachran he wass ferry angry with me many a time, and many a time I hef said to him, 'Angus, you will be doing petter if you will go away and get some other young lass to be your wife, for it will be a bad tay the tay that I quarrel with my own people to come to you and be your wife.' And it iss many the night I hef cried about it—from the night to the morning; and it wass many a time I will wish that I had neffer seen him, and that he had neffer come down from the Lewis, the year that the herring came round

about Darroch and Killeena. And now—and now—”

Well, the girl burst into tears at this point, and the minister not knowing very well what to do, brought out a bottle of whisky, and said,—

“Now, Moira, be a good lass, and do not cry ass if you wass without friends in the world. What iss it now that iss the matter?”

“Well, Mr. MacDonald,” the girl said, between her sobs, “it wass five days or four days ago that Angus came to me, and he said to me, ‘Moira, it iss no more any use the trying to get married in Darroch, for your father he iss a violent man, and he will not hear of it; and what we hef to do iss to go away from Darroch, you and me together, and when the wedding iss all over, then you can come back and tell your people.’”

“That wass not well spoken,” said the minister. “It iss a bad day for a young lass when she hass to run away from her own people.”

He was beginning to see the cause of the

trouble that was visible on the fair young face.

“And I said to him,” continued the girl, struggling to restrain her tears, “I said to him, ‘It iss a hard thing that you ask, Angus M’Eachran, but it iss many a long day and many a long month you hef waited for me to marry you, as I said I would marry you; and if it iss so that there will be no chance of our getting married in Darroch, I will go away with you.’ Then he said, ‘Moirra, I will find out about a poat going up to the Lewis, and if they will put us ashore at Borvabost, or Barvas, or Callernish, we will walk across the island to Styornoway, and there we will get the poat to tek us to Glassgow.’”

“To Glassgow!” cried the minister. “Wass you thinking of going to Glassgow, Moira Fergus?”

The girl looked rather abashed.

“And you do not know what an ahfu’ place is



Glassgow—ay, indeed, an ahfu' place," said the minister earnestly. "No, you do not know—but I hef been more ass three times or two times in 'Glassgow—and for a young lass to go there! You do not know, Moira Fergus, that it iss filled, every street of it, with wild men that hef no more care for the Sabbath-day ass if it wass Tuesday, ay, or even Mònday—and the sodgers there—and the Roman Catholics—and no like the Catholics that you will see, one of them, or two of them, about Lochaber, where they are ferry like good, plain, other people—but it iss the *Roman* Catholics, Moira—it iss the real *Roman* Catholics, Moira—you will find in Glassgow, and they are ferry wild men, and if they were to rise against the town in the night-time, it would be the Lord's own mércy if they did not burn every person in his bed. Indeed, indeed, Moira Fergus, you must not go to Glassgow!"

"And I do not want to go to Glassgow!"



Moira said excitedly, "that is what I hef come to you about this tay, Mr. MacDonald. I hef a great fear of going to Glassgow, and I wass say-ing to myself that it wass you, Mr. MacDonald, that maybe could help me—and if you wass to see Angus M'Eachran—"

"But if I wass to see your father, Moira Fergus—there iss no man so mad ass not to know that a young lass will be thinking of getting married."

"That will be of no use whateffer, Mr. MacDonald. It iss a very angry man he is, and if there iss any more word of the marriage I will be afraid to go back to Ardtilleach."

"Then the teffle—and tam him!—hass got into his head!" said the minister, with a furious blow on the table. "It iss no patience I hef with a foolish man!"

Moira was rather frightened, but she said in a low voice,—

"Ay, ay, it iss a ferry angry man he is; and

there iss no use going to him, Mr. MacDonald ; but this iss what I wass thinking, Mr. MacDonald, if you wass being so kind ass to go to Angus M'Eachran, and tell him that it iss not a good thing for us to go away to Glassgow. I hef given my word to him—yes, and I will not draw back from that—but now I hef a great fear of going to Glassgow—”

The minister was during this time shifting rather uneasily from the table to the window and from the window to the table. He was evidently much excited : he seemed scarcely to hear what the girl was saying. At last he suddenly interrupted her.

“Listen to me, Moira Fergus. It iss no business of mine—no, it iss not any business of mine—as a minister, to interfere in the family affairs of any one whateffer ; and you had no right to come to the minister and ask him to go and speak to Angus M'Eachran. No, you had no right ; and yet I will say this, Moira Fergus, that you

had a ferry good right—ay, the teffle is in it if you had not a ferry good right. For I am a natif of this island—well, it wass in Harris I wass born, but what iss the use of being ferry particular?—and I am a natif of this island as well as a minister, and I hef known your family for a great many years, and I hef known you to be a good lass—and—and this iss what I wass going to say to you that, before I will see you going away to Glassgow, I will marry you and Angus M'Eachran myself, ay, so that no one shall know of it until it is all ferry well ofer. And what do you say to that, Moira Fergus?"

The girl started, flushed, and then looked timidly down.

"It iss a ferry good man you are, Mr. MacDonald," she said hesitatingly, "and a ferry good friend you hef always been to me—but—but it iss not for me to say that I hef come to ask you to marry us; and it is Angus M'Eachran, Mr.

MacDonald, and not me, that hass to say 'yes' or 'no' to that."

"Ay, ay!" said the minister cheerfully and courageously, "it is no fault for a young lass to be shy; and it iss right what you hef said, Moira, that I will speak to Angus M'Eachran. And there iss another I will speak to apout it, for it iss no trifling matter, Moira, and I will hef to see that we are sure and safe in what hass to be done; and you know that there iss not any one about the islands that has trafelled so far ass Mr. Mackenzie, of Borva; and it iss a great many things he will know, and I think I will go and say a word to him, Moira."

"It iss a long way the way to Borva, Mr. MacDonald."

"Well, I was told by Alister Lewis that the men of the *Nighean-dubh* were coming up from Taransay about one o'clock or twelve o'clock to-morrow's morning, and if it iss not ferry pad weather they will go on to Loch Roag, so I think

I will go with the *Nighean-dubh*. Now, you will go back to Ardtilleach, Moira Fergus, and you will say not a word to any one until the time wass come I will be speaking myself to Angus M'Eachran ; and now you will tak a tram, Moira, for it iss a ferry coorse sort o' day, and a healthy young lass will hef no harm from a trop of good whisky."

"You are ferry kind, Mr. MacDonald, but I do not touch the whisky."

"No ? Then I will hef a drop myself, to wish you good luck, Moira ; and when I come back from Borvabost, then I will tell you what Mr. Mackenzie says, and you will keep up your spirits, Moira, and you will find no need to go away from your own people to be married in Glassgow."

When Moira Fergus went outside, a new light seemed to fill the world. Certainly the sea was green and rough, and there were huge white breakers heaving over on the black rocks. But



it seemed to her that there was a sort of sunshine in the green of the sea ; and she had a consciousness of sunshine being behind the grey clouds overhead ; and the dull brown moorland—mile after mile of it, in low undulation—was less lonely than when she had crossed it an hour before. And that red-faced irascible little minister, who lived by himself in the solitary manse out by the sea, and who was just a trifle too fond of whisky and fierce language during six days of the week, was to her as a bright angel come down from heaven with promises of help, so that the girl, as she thought of the future, did not know whether to laugh or to cry for joy.



## CHAPTER II.

## A VISIT TO GREAT PEOPLE.

“THE teffle—and tam him !—is in the carelessness of you, Alister-nan-Each !” cried the minister, catching up his coat-tails. “What for will you knock your fish against my coat, and me going up to see Mr. Mackenzie and his daughter, that iss ass good ass an English lady now ?”

Alister made a humble apology to the minister, and took his own bonnet to remove any lingering traces of the *Nighean-dubh* from the minister’s costume, and then Mr. MacDonald got ashore at Borvabost. He had a word or two to say to some of the people whom he knew ; then he went up and over the hill to the house of a certain Mr. Mackenzie, who was called by some folks the “King of Borva.”

“And iss Mr. Mackenzie in the house, Mairi ? said he to the young girl who came to the passage—the doors in this part of the world are kept shut against rain, but never against strangers.

“No,” said she, “Mr. MacDonald, he is not in Borva at all, but away over at Stornoway, and it is ferry sorry he will be that you hef come to Borva and him away from his own house. But there iss Miss Sheila, she will be down at her own house ; and she will be very ill pleased that you will come to Borva if you will not call at her house.”

“Oh, I will call at her house ; and it is ferry glad I am that she hass not gone away ass yet ; and I am glad to see that you are still with Mr. Mackenzie, Mairi.”

The old minister, grumbling over his disappointment, set out once more, and walked away across the moorland and down to a plateau over a quiet bay, where there was a large stone house built, with a verandah and a flower-garden

in front. He saw there a young lady watering the tree-fuchsias—a handsome healthily-complexioned young woman, with dark hair, and deep blue eyes, who was the daughter of Mr. Mackenzie. She was rather well liked by the islanders, who generally called her “Miss Sheila,” notwithstanding that she was married; although some of them had got into a shy, half-comical, half-tender fashion of calling her “Princess Sheila,” merely because her husband had a yacht so named.

“And are you ferry well?” said she, running forward, with a bright smile on her face, to the minister. “And hef you come all the way from Darroch, Mr. MacDonald?”

“Ay, ay,” said the minister, a little embarrassed, and looking down, “I hef come from Darroch; and it is a proud tay this tay that I will shake hands with you, Miss—Mrs. Laffenter; and it iss ferry glad I am that I will come to Borva, although your father is not here, for it iss not

effery time in the year that a stranger will see you, Mrs. Laffenter."

"Oh, but you are no stranger, Mr. MacDonald," said this Mrs. Lavender. "Now come into the house, and I will ask you to stay and have some dinner with us, Mr. MacDonald, for you cannot leave for Darroch again to-night. And what did you want to see my father about, Mr. MacDonald?"

He followed her into the house, and sat down in a spacious sitting-room, the like of which, in its wonderful colours and decorations, he had never seen before. He could compare it only with Stornoway Castle, or his dreams of the palace in which the Queen lived in London.

Well, he told all the story of Moira Fergus and Angus M'Eachran to Mrs. Lavender, and said that he had come to ask the advice of her father, who was a man who had travelled much and amassed knowledge.

"Surely you yourself are the best judge," said

the handsome young wife. "They have lived long enough in the parish, hef they not, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Oh, that iss not it—that iss not the matter at all, Mrs. Laffenter!" said he emphatically. "I can marry them—oh, yes, I know I can marry them—in my own house, if I like. But it iss the prudence—it iss the prudence, Mrs. Laffenter—of it that iss in the question; and I am not sure of the prudence of it."

"Then I must ask my husband," said Sheila.

She went to the open window, took a whistle from her pocket, and blew a note loud and shrill that seemed to go echoing far across Loch Roag, away amid the blue and misty solitudes of the great Suainabhal. She stood there for a minute or two. Far below her there was a schooner-yacht resting quietly in the bay; she could see a small boat put off, and land on the shore a man and a very tiny boy. The man was clad in rough blue homespun; he set the child of three



or so on his shoulder, and then proceeded to climb the hill. In a few minutes there was the sound of some one on the gravel outside, and presently a tall young man, somewhat heavily bearded, marched into the drawing-room, and threw the child into its mother's outstretched arms.

"Mr. MacDonald, of Darroch?" he cried. "Why, of course! And haven't you got such a thing as a glass of whisky in the house, Sheila, when a visitor comes all the way from Darroch to see you? And what's the best of your news, Mr. MacDonald?"

Sheila—or Mrs. Lavender, as one ought to call her—having deposited the very young gentleman on the sofa, and given him a mighty piece of cake to console him for maternal neglect, proceeded to tell her husband of the causes of Mr. MacDonald's visit. His decision on the point was quickly taken.

"You'll get yourself into trouble, Mr. Mac-



Donald, if you help them to a clandestine marriage. I wouldn't touch it, if I were you."

"Yes, I am afraid you will get yourself into trouble," said Sheila, with an air of wisdom.

"But, Kott pless me!" said the minister, indignantly, "hef I not told you they will run away to Glassgow?—and iss there anything ass bad ass that—that a young lad and a young lass will go away to Glassgow, and not one of them married until they get there?"

"Well, there's something in that," said Mr. Lavender. "What sort of fellow is this Angus M'Eachran?"

"Oh, he is a ferry tiligent young man—he hass a share in the poat, and he hass some money in the pank, and there iss none more cleffer than he is at the fishing. Ay, ay, he is a cleffer young man, and a good-looking young man; but if he wass not so free with his laugh, and his joke, and his glass—well, I will say nothing against the young man, who is a ferry respectable man what-

offer, and there is no reason why John Fergus should shut the door against him."

"Then can't the father be talked over?" said Mr. Lavender, pretending to snatch at the cake which his son was busily eating.

"Oh, couldn't I say something to him!" Sheila said, with entreaty in her eyes.

"You, Miss—Mrs. Laffenter!" said the minister, with surprise. "You, to go into John Fergus's house! Yes, indeed, it would be a proud day the day for him that you went into his house—ay, if he wass fifteen or a dozen John Ferguses. But you hef no imagination of that man's temper—and the sweerin of him!—"

"Oh, I should stop that," said Mr. Lavender. "If you like to go and talk to him, Sheila, I will undertake that he shan't swear much!"

"How could you know?" the girl said, with a laugh. "He would swear in the Gaelic. But if there is no other means, Mr. MacDonald, I am

sure anything is better than letting them run away to Glasgow."

"Sheila," said the husband, "when do we go to London?"

"In about a week now we shall be ready, I think," she said.

"Well, look here. You seem interested in that girl—I don't remember her having been here at all. However, suppose we put off our going to London, and see these young folk through their troubles?"

Of course he saw by her face that that was what she wanted: he had no sooner suggested such a thing than the happiest light possible sprang to her eyes.

"Oh, will you?" she cried.

"And in for a penny, in for a pound," said he. "I suppose you want witnesses, Mr. MacDonald? What if my wife and myself went round in the yacht to Darroch, and helped you at your private wedding?"

“Hey !” said Mr. MacDonald, with his eyes staring. “You, sir, come to the wedding of Moira Fergus ? And Miss Sheila, too ? Why, there iss no man in all the islands would not gif away his daughter—ay, twenty daughters—if he wass told you will be coming to the wedding—not any man but John Fergus ; and there is the anger of the teffle himself in the nature of John Fergus ; and it iss no man will go near him.”

“But I will go near him !” said Sheila proudly, “and he will speak no rough speech to me.”

“Not, if I can understand him, and there is a door handy,” said her husband, with a laugh.

“Ay, ay, you will come to the wedding ?” said the minister, almost to himself, as if this assurance were almost too much for mortal man to hear. He had made a long and disagreeable voyage from the one island to the other, in order to seek the advice of a capable man ; but he had not expected such high and honourable sanction of his secret aims. Now, indeed, he had no more

hesitation. Mr. Mackenzie was a wise man, and a travelled man, no doubt; but not even his counsel could have satisfied the old minister as did the prompt and somewhat reckless tender of aid on the part of Mr. Lavender, and the frank and hearty sympathy of the beautiful "Princess Sheila."

## CHAPTER III.

## A MEETING OF LOVERS.

A STILL, calm night lay over the scattered islands; there was no sound abroad but the occasional calling of the wildfowl; in the perfect silence there was scarcely even a murmur from the smooth sea. Night as it was, the world was all lit up with a wonderful white glory; for the moon down there in the south was almost full; and here the clear radiance fell on the dark moorland flats, on the bays of white sand fronting the sea, and on the promontories of black rock that jutted out into the shining water. Killeena lay cold and silent under the wan glare; Darroch showed no signs of life; the far mountains of the larger islands seemed visionary and strange. It was a night of wonderful beauty,



but that the unusual silence of the sea had something awful in it; one had a sense that the mighty plain of water was perhaps stealthily rising to cover for ever those bits of rock which, during a few brief centuries, had afforded foothold to a handful of human beings.

Down in one of the numerous creeks a young man was idly walking this way and that along the smooth sand—occasionally looking up to the rocks above him. This was Angus M'Eachran, the lover of Moira Fergus. There was obviously nothing Celtic about the young man's outward appearance: he was clearly of the race descended from the early Norwegian settlers in these islands—a race that, in some parts, has, notwithstanding intermarriage, preserved very distinct characteristics. He was a tall young fellow, broad-chested, yellow-bearded, good-looking enough, and grave and deliberate of speech. Moreover, he was a hard-working, energetic, shrewd-headed youth; there was no better

fisherman round these coasts ; he had earned his share in the boat, so that he was not at the mercy of any of the curers ; he had talked of building a small stone cottage for himself ; and it was said that he had a little money in the bank at Stornoway. But if Angus M'Eachran was outwardly a Norseman, he had many of the characteristics of the Celtic temperament. He was quick to imagine and resent affront. His seeming gravity of demeanour would, under provocation of circumstances, disappear altogether ; and there was no one madder than he in the enjoyment of a frolic, no one more generous in a fit of enthusiasm, no one more reckless in the prosecution of a quarrel. They said he sometimes took a glass too much on shore—led away by the delight of good fellowship ; but the bitterest cold night, the most persistent rain, the most exhausting work, could not tempt him to touch a drop of whisky when he was out at the fishing.

A young girl, shawled over, came over the rocks, and made her way down to the sands.

“You are ferry late, Moira,” said he. “I was thinking you wass not coming at all the night.”

“It iss not an easy thing for me to get away, and that no one will know,” said she timidly.

“Ay, ay, and that iss the worst of it!” said he bitterly. “It is no ferry good thing that you will hef to come away from the house like that, as if you wass a thief; and if it wass any other young lass, she would not hef suffered that so long; and now, Moira, this is what I hef to say to you—that you must do what you hef promised to do, and when we go to Glasgow——”

“Oh, Angus!” she said, “it iss not to Glasgow I can go——”

Even in the pale moonlight she could see the quick look of surprise, and anger, and jealousy that leapt to his eyes.

“And you will not go to Glassgow?” said he.

“Angus!” the girl said. “It iss ferry much I hef to say to you, and you will not be angry with me until I tell you. And it wass yesterday I went ofer to Mr. MacDonald, and I wass saying to him that there wass no more use in trying to speak to my father, and that you and me, Angus, we were thinking of going away to Glassgow—”

“And it iss a foolish lass you are!” he said impetuously, “and now he will come ofer to Ardtilleach—”

“He will not think of coming ofer to Ardtilleach; it iss a ferry kind man that Mr. MacDonald is; and he will say to me, ‘Moir, will it not be petter, and a great deal petter, that I will marry Angus M’Eachran and you in Darroch, and no one will know until it iss ofer, and then you can go and tell your father?’”

“Ay, did he say that?” exclaimed the young man, with his eyes wide.

“Indeed he did.”

“Ay, ay, and it iss a ferry good man he is whateffer,” said Angus, with a sudden change of mood. “And you, Moira, what wass it you will say to him?”

“Me?”

“Ay, you.”

“Well,” said the girl, looking down, but with some pride in her tone; “it iss not for a young lass to say yes or to say no about such a thing—it iss for you, Angus, to go to the minister. But this is what I hef said to him, that the going to Glassgow wass a great trouble to me—ay, and a ferry great trouble—”

“Then I will go and see Mr. MacDonald!” said Angus hastily. “And this iss what I will say to him—that he iss a ferry good man, and that before three weeks iss ofer, ay, or two weeks, or four weeks, I will send to him a gallon of whisky the like of which he will not find from the Butt of Lewis down to Barra Head. Ay,



Moir, and so you went all the way across the island yesterday? It iss a good lass you are; and you will be ferry much petter when you are married and in your own house, and away from your father, that hass no petter words for his own children ass if they wass swines. And it iss ferry early the morn's mornin' that I will go over to Mr. MacDonald—"

"But you need not do that, Angus," the girl said, "for Mr. MacDonald has gone away to Borva, to ask the advice of Mr. Mackenzie. Yes, it is a great teal that Mr. MacDonald is doing for us."

"It will be the good whisky he will hef from me!" muttered Angus to himself.

"And now, Angus, I will be going back, for my father he thinks I hef only gone over to get a candle from Mrs. M'Lachlan; and you will say nothing about all that I hef told you, only you will go ofer to Mr. MacDonald, Angus, on



Saturday or Friday, and you will speak to him. And I will say good-night to you, Angus."

"I will go with you, Moira, along a bit of the road."

"No, Angus," the girl said anxiously, "if there wass any one will see us and will take the story to my father—"

She had no need to complete the sentence. Her companion laughed lightly and courageously as he took her hand.

"Ay, ay, Moira, it iss not always that you will hef to be afrait. And the story they will hef to take to your father, that will be a ferry goot story, that will be the ferry best story he will ever hear. Oh yes, he will say three words or two words to efferypody around him when he hears that teffle of a story."

If Angus was inclined to make light of the old man's probable rage, his sweetheart was not. The mere mention of it seemed to increase her

desire to depart ; and so he kissed her, and she went on her way home.

Perhaps he would have grumbled at the shortness of the interview but that this new project had almost taken his breath away, and now wholly occupied his mind. He clambered up the rocks, got across to the road, and slowly walked along in the clear moonlight, in the direction of the cottages of Ardtilleach. To have a lover's meeting cut short on such a night would have been grievous under other circumstances ; but that was forgotten in the suggestion that his marriage of Moira Fergus had now become possible and near.

Angus M'Eachran had never been to Glasgow, and he had the vague fear of the place which dwells in the minds of many islanders. The project of flight thither was a last and desperate resource after all hope of conciliating John Fergus was abandoned. But the young man had never felt so confident about it as he

pretended to be in speaking to Moira Fergus. He knew nothing of how the people lived in Glasgow ; of the possibility of two strangers getting married ; of the cost of the long journey. Then he might have to leave his fishing for an indefinite period, and embarrass his comrades in the boat ; he had a suspicion, too, that old John Fergus, having been robbed of his daughter, would appeal to the sheriff, and impound the money which he, Angus M'Eachran, had in the bank at Stornoway.

It was with great joy, therefore, that he heard of this proposal. It seemed so much more fitting and proper for a man and a woman to get married in their own island. There would be no stain on the fair name of Moira Fergus, if she was married by Mr. MacDonald himself ; whereas no one knew anything about the character of the Glasgow clergymen, who might, for all one knew, be secretly Roman Catholics. And then there was the remote chance that the

wedding would have the august approval of the far-known Mr. Mackenzie, the King of Borva ; which would silence the most censorious old hag who ever croaked over a peat-fire.

Angus M'Eachran reached the long and straggling line of hovels and cottages known as the fishing hamlet of Ardtilleach. Down there, on the white shores of the small creek, several of the boats were drawn up, their hulls black in the moonlight. Up on the rocks above were built the two long and substantial curing-houses, with plenty of empty barrels lying round the doors. There was scarcely any one about, though here and there the smoke from a chimney showed that the peats were being stirred within to light up the gloomy interior of the hut. He passed the rude little cottage in which John Fergus and his family lived.

"Ay, ay, Moira," he was thinking to himself, "you will have a better house to live in by and by, and you will have better treatment in the

house, and you will be the mistress of the house. And there will no one then say a hard word to you, whether he is your father or whether he is not your father ; and I will make it a bad day for any one that says a hard word to you, Moira Fergus."

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE GOOD NEWS.

ANGUS M'EACHRAN hung his head in a sheepish fashion when he stood before the minister. The stalwart, yellow-bearded young fisherman found it was not an easy thing to have to speak about marriage; and the proposal to give Mr. MacDonald a gallon of the best whisky had gone clean out of his head—banished, perhaps, by an instinctive reverence for spiritual authority. The little red-faced minister regarded him sternly.

“It wass not well done of you, Angus M'Eachran,” said he, “to think of running away to Glasgow with John Fergus's daughter.”

“And whose fault wass that, Mr. MacDonald?” said the fisherman. “It wass the fault of John Fergus himself.”



“ Ay, ay, but you would hef made bad things worse. Why, to Glassgow ! Do you know what Glassgow is ? No, you do not know ; but you would hef found out what it iss to go to Glassgow ! It was a ferry goot thing that Moira Fergus had the goot sense to come ofer to me ; and now, as I tell you, we will try to satisfy effery one if you will come ofer on the Wednesday morning.”

“ It wass ferry kind of you, Mr. MacDonald, to go all the way to Borva to ask apout the marriage ; I will neffer forget that, neffer at all. And I will tell you this, Mr. MacDonald, that it wass no great wish I effer had for the going to Glassgow ; for when a man gets married, it is but right he should hef his friends apout him, for a dance and a song. And it wass many a time I hef peen thinking, when I first became acquaint with Moira Fergus, that we would hef a ferry goot wedding, and hef a dance and a tram ; and it wass Alister Lewis the schoolmaster said to me

the other day, 'Angus,' says he, 'do you not think of getting married? And when you are married,' says he, 'my wife and me will come and trink a glass to you and Moira Fergus.' And now, Mr. MacDonald, there will be no wedding at all—and not a single tance—or a tram—and no one to be there and be quite sure that we are married."

Angus M'Eachran had become rather excited, and had blundered into eloquence. It was, indeed, a sore point with the young fisherman that Moira and he were to be deprived of the great merry-making in the life of a man or woman. They would be married in a corner, with no joyous crowd of witnesses, no skire of the pipes, no whisky, no dancing or reels under the midnight sky.

"And you will not think, Mr. MacDonald," said he, returning to his ordinary grave and shy demeanour, "that I hef no thanks for you, although we will hef no goot wedding. Thet

iss not anypotty's fault but the fault of John Fergus ; and when I will go to tell John Fergus that his daughter iss married—"

"You will not go to tell John Fergus that, Angus M'Eachran," said the minister. "It is another that will tell John Fergus. It is Miss Sheila Mackenzie, that iss Mrs. Laffenter now, that will be coming to tek the news to John Fergus."

The minister spoke proudly. He was vain of his acquaintance with great people. He had, indeed, reserved this piece of news until he saw fit to overwhelm his visitor with it.

The young fisherman uttered an exclamation in the Gaelic ; he could scarcely believe what he had heard.

"Iss it Miss Sheila Mackenzie will be coming all the way from Borva to the marriage of Moira Fergus ?" he said, with his eyes full of wonder.

"Ay, and her husband, too !" said the

minister proudly. "Ay, and they are coming with their schooner yacht, and eight men aboard of her, to say nothing of Mrs. Patterson's boy. And you were saying, Angus M'Eachran, there would be no one at your wedding! Oh no, there will be no one at your wedding! It will only be Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter that will be at your wedding!"

Angus could not reply to this deadly sarcasm; he was lost in astonishment. Then he suddenly said, snatching up his cap,—

"I am going, Mr. MacDonald, to tek the news to Moira Fergus."

"Wait a minute, it iss a ferry great hurry you are in, Angus," said the minister. "You need not be afrait that any one will tek the news before yoursel'. There iss many things we hef to settle apout first—"

"But I will come ofer to-night again," said the fisherman—he was impatient to carry this wonderful news to Moira.

“Then there iss the teffle in your hurry, Angus M’Eachran!” said the minister angrily. “You will come ofer again to-night? You will not come ofer again to night! Do you think you can waste the tays and the nights in running apout Darroch, when it iss to Stornoway you hef to go for the ring, and the money, and all that I hef told you?”

The fisherman stood abashed; he put his cap on the table, and was content to receive his instructions with patience.

But when he went out, and had got a safe distance from the house, he suddenly tossed his cap high in the air.

“Hey!” he cried aloud, “here iss the good news for Moira Fergus!”

He laughed to himself as he sped rapidly across the moorland. It was a fine, bright morning; the sun was warm on the heather and the white rocks; now and again he saw before him a young grouse walk coolly across the dusty



road. He took little notice, however, of anything around him. It was enough that the fresh air and the sunlight seemed to fill his lungs with a sort of laughing-gas. Never before had he walked so rapidly across the island.

The consequence was that he reached Ardtilleach about one o'clock.

"Now," said he to himself, "the girls will be at the school; and old John Fergus will be up at the curing-house; and what if Moira Fergus be all by herself at home?"

The news he had gave him so much courage that he did not spy about; he walked straight up to John Fergus's cottage, and, stooping, passed in. Sure enough, there was Moira, and alone. She was seated near the fire, and was cleaning and chopping up some vegetables for the big iron pot that stood beside her. When she recognised Angus M'Eachran, she uttered a little cry of surprise, then she hastily



jumped to her feet, and beat the parings out of her lap. But the young fisherman was not offended by the untidy scraps of carrot and turnip that clung to her apron; he was rather pleased to see that she was chopping up those vegetables very neatly—and he knew, for many a time he had had to make broth for himself.

“And are you not afrait, Angus, to come into this house?” she asked anxiously.

“No, I am not afrait!” said he. “For I hef the good news for you—ay, ay, I hef the good news for you this day, Moira—”

“Iss it my father—?”

“No, no!” said he. “It iss nothing of your father. I will not ask your father for anything, not if he wass to live for sixty years, ay, and twenty years mirover. But I was ofer to see Mr. MacDonald this morning—ay, I set out ferry soon, for I heard last night he was come back

from Borva—and this **m**orning I was with him for a ferry long time. And now it iss all settled, Moira, my lass, and this ferry night I will be going away to Stornoway to buy the ring, Moira, and get some money out of the bank, and other things. And Mr. MacDonald, he will say to me, ‘Angus, you will hef to go and ask Moira Fergus to tell you the day she will be married, for effery young lass hass a right to that;’ but I hef said to him, ‘Mr. MacDonald, there iss no use for that; for it wass next Wednesday in the next week we wass to go away to Glassgow to be married; and that iss the day that iss fixed already’—and so, Moira, it iss Wednesday of the next week you will be reaty to go ofer—and—and—and iss there anything wrong with you, Moira Fergus?”

He offered her his hand to steady her; she was rather pale, and she trembled. Then she sate down on the wooden stool again, and turned her eyes to the floor.

“And it iss not ferry glad you are that the wedding iss near?” said he, with some disappointment.

“It iss not that, Angus M’Eachran,” she said in a low voice. “It iss that—I am afrait—and it is a ferry terrible thing to go away and be married all by yourself—and no friend with you—”

“No friend?” said he, with a sudden joy: if this was all her doubt, he would soon remove it. “Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, you hef not heard all the news. There will be no one to come to your wedding? Do you know this, Moira, that it iss Miss Sheila Mackenzie and her husband that iss an Englishman, and they are both coming to your wedding—ay, in that fine poat that iss the most peautiful poat that wass effer come in to Stornoway harbour—and who iss it in all this island that hass Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter come to her wedding—tell me that, Moira Fergus!”

Well, when Moira heard that Sheila Mackenzie

and her husband were coming all the way from Borva to be present at her wedding, she burst into a fit of crying, and even the young man beside her knew what that meant.

“Ay, ay,” said he, “it iss a ferry great deal the rich and the grand people can do for the poor people when it iss in their mind to do it, and it would be a pad tay for the poor people of Borva the tay that Miss Sheila would go away altogether to London; but there iss no fear of that now; and she is coming to your wedding, Moira, and it iss not pecause she is ferry rich and ferry grand that you will be proud of that, but I hef seen that you wass sore put about that there will be no woman at all at the wedding, and now here is one, and one that iss known through all the island—and it iss nothing to cry about, Moira Fergus.”

“No, it iss nothing to cry about,” said the girl, “only—it iss a ferry great kindness—and I will not know what to say—ay, are you quite

sure they are coming all the way to Darroch, Angus ? ”

“ Indeed there iss more than that to tell you, Moira ; for it iss Mrs. Laffenter will be for coming to Ardtilleach to speak to your father as soon as the wedding is ofer—”

“ What do you say, Angus M’Eachran ? ” the girl said, suddenly rising. “ Hef you no sense to let her speak of such a thing ? You will know what a man my father iss when he iss angry ; and it iss you and me that will hef to tek his anger, not a stranger that has done us a great kindness ; and it iss very thoughtless of you, Angus, to hef let Miss Sheila speak of that—”

“ Moira, what are you thinking of ? ” he said. “ When wass it that I hef seen Miss Sheila, and her away at Borva ? It wass the minister, he wass speaking to both Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter, both of the two of them together, and it wass Miss Sheila herself will want to see your father sure enough and mirover ! ”



The girl said nothing in reply, for a sudden fear had fallen over her : a shadow darkened the doorway. Angus M'Eachran half instinctively turned round—there was John Fergus, staring at him with an anger which for the moment could not express itself in words. Moira's father was almost a dwarf in stature ; but he was broad-chested, bandy-legged, and obviously of great physical strength. He had a hard, grey and sullen face, piercing black eyes under bushy grey eyebrows, thin lips, and a square jaw.

“Ay, it iss you, Angus M'Eachran,” said he, still blocking up the doorway as if to prevent escape ; “it wass a true word they will bring me that you will be for going into my house. And what iss it that will bring you to my house ?”

“It iss not a ferry friendly man you are, John Fergus,” said the tall young sailor, rather gloomily, “that you will say such things. And what iss the harm that one man will go into



another man's house, and both of them neighbours together—"

"Ay, this iss the harm of it!" said John Fergus, giving freer vent to his rage. "You wass thinking that the lasses were at the school; and you wass thinking that I wass away o'er at Killeena with the new oars; and then you wass coming apout the house—like a thief that will watch a time to come apout a house—that wass the harm of it, Angus M'Eachran."

The younger man's face grew rather darker, but he kept his temper down.

"I am no thief, John Fergus. If it wass any other man than yourself will say such a thing to me—"

"No, you are no thief," said the father, with sarcastic emphasis, "you will only come apout the house when there iss effery one away from it but a young lass, and you will think there iss some whisky in the house—"

The younger man burst into a bitter laugh.

“ Whisky ! Iss it whisky ? I hef come after the whisky ! Indeed and mirover that would be a fine day the day I tasted a glass of your whisky ; for there iss no man alife in Darroch or in Killeena too that effer had a glass of whisky from *you*, John Fergus ! ”

At this deadly insult the older man, with something of an inarticulate cry of rage, darted forward, and would have seized his opponent had not Moira thrown herself between them.

“ Father,” the trembling girl said, putting her hands on his breast, “ keep back—keep back for a minute, and I will tell you—indeed it wass not the whisky that Angus M’Eachran will come for—it wass a message there wass from Miss Sheila Mackenzie—and he will hear of it from the minister—and he will come into the house for a minute—and there was no harm in that. It iss your own house, father—you will not harm a man in your own house—”

He thrust her aside.

“Angus M’Eachran,” said he, “this iss what I will say to you—you was saying to yourself this many a day back that you will marry this lass here. I tell you now, by Kott, you will not marry her—not this year, nor the next year, nor many a year after that. And there iss more ass I hef to say to you. This house iss no house for you; and if it iss any day I will come into the house and you will be here, it will be a bad day that day for you, by Kott.”

“That iss ferry well said,” retorted the younger man, whose eyes were afire, but who kept himself outwardly calm, “and this iss what I will say to you, John Fergus. The day may come to you that you will be ferry glad for me to come into your house, and you will be ferry sore in your heart that you wass saying such things to me this day. And I will say this to you—do you think it iss the fighting will keep me out of the house? Wass you thinking I wass afrait of you? By Kott, John Fergus,

two men like you would not mek me afrait ; and that day will be a bad day for you that you tek to fighting with me."

The girl was once more for interfering with her entreaties.

"No, Moira," said her lover, "stand back—I am for no fighting—if there iss fighting it iss not in a man's own house that is the place for fighting. But this iss what I say to you, John Fergus, that you hef no need to fear that I will come to your house. No, not if I wass living for thirty or twenty years in Ardtilleach will I come into your house—neffer, as I am a living man."

And that vow he kept.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE WEDDING.

THE “ Princess Sheila ” lay at her moorings in the bay ; and the morning sunlight shone on her tall and shapely masts and on the gleaming white decks. It was a lonely part of the coast of Darroch ; there was not another vessel on the smooth plain of the sea ; far away in the direction of some rocks a couple of seals were alternately raising their heads above the water—like the black head of a man—as if in wonder over this invasion of their silent haunts. Beautiful, indeed, was the morning of Moira Fergus’s marriage. The water around the shore was so calm and so clear that one could distinguish the sand and the white star-fish at an extraordinary

depth. The sea was of a light blue fading into grey at the horizon. The sky was of a darker blue ; and the almost motionless clouds dappled the sunlit shoulders of the hills and the wide expanse of the moorland.

About ten o'clock a pinnacle put off from the yacht, and the quiet bay echoed the sound of the rowlocks as the four sturdy seamen pulled into the land. They ran her by the side of some loose stones that served for a rude landing-jetty ; and then Mr. and Mrs. Lavender stepped on shore. The former was certainly not in proper wedding attire, for he had on his ordinary boating-suit of blue homespun ; but the young lady wore a yachting-costume which had been designed by her husband, and which was the wonder of all the islands around. The old women who had seen Miss Sheila, as they mostly called her, but once in this costume had many a long story to tell about it over the peat fire to their neighbours who had not been so fortunate ; and



it was gravely doubted whether the wife of Sir James, or the wife of the Duke of Argyll, or even the Queen herself had such a wonderful dress and hat and gloves.

They walked up and over the rough shingle, until they reached a path skirting some low sand-hills, and this they followed along the shore until they reached the manse. The minister was at the door; he came out bareheaded to receive them; there was a great dignity in his speech.

“Well, are the young folks here?” said Sheila.

“Yes, indeed and mirover,” said the minister, “and it will be a proud day for them that you will sign the marriage lines, Mrs. Laffenter, and you, sir, too. And I hef got the horse for you, Mrs. Laffenter, if you will be determined to go to Ardtilleach. And I hef peen told that the English hef two dinners in the day, which is a strange thing to me, but it iss no pusiness of

mine whateffer ; and you will be so long in England every year, Mrs. Laffenter, that you will hef gone away from the way you used to live at home ; but if you wass so kind, now, ass to tek the first dinner—that iss at one o'clock—in my poor house, it would be a proud day for me too. And it iss no ferry fine dinner I hef, but some mutton just ass goot as you get it in London ; and I hef some ferry goot whisky—there iss no petter apout here. And if you wass so kind, Miss—Mrs. Laffenter—”

“Certainly, Mr. MacDonald,” said Mr. Lavender, interposing ; “we will dine with you at one, on condition you dine with us at seven—that is, if we can get back from Ardtilleach by that time. You must try the English way of having two dinners—you may call the second one supper, if you like. Now don’t let us keep the young people waiting.”

Angus M’Eachran and Moira Fergus were seated in the minister’s parlour, both of them

very silent. When Mrs. Lavender entered the room, the girl rose hastily, as if she would rush forward to thank her ; then she paused, and seemed to shrink back.

“And are you ferry well, Moira ?” said Mrs. Lavender, advancing and holding out her hand. “And do you remember the last time I saw you at Ardtilleach ?”

The girl, trembling a good deal, made a curtsy, and timidly took the hand that was offered to her.

“It iss no words I hef this tay—to thank you,” she said, “that you will come to the wedding of a poor lass—for Angus M’Eachran he wass wanting me to tek the money to get the clothes for the wedding, but if I had got the clothes for the wedding, it wass effery one in Ardtilleach would know of it. And—and—that iss why I hef not the clothes for the wedding.”

It was an apology. Moira was ashamed of her rough clothes, that were not fit for a wed-

ding to which Miss Sheila Mackenzie of Borva had come. But Sheila made her sit down, and sate down beside her, and talked to her of many things, so that there was soon an end to her shamefacedness.

“Mr. MacDonald,” said Angus M’Eachran, rather anxiously—seeing that the minister was thinking more of his distinguished guests than of the business in hand, “if you wass ass kind ass to be quick—for it iss Moira’s father if he wass to go back to the house, he might hef some thought of it.”

“Ay, ay,” said the minister, recollecting himself. “Where is Isabal?”

He called his housekeeper into the room; she was smartly dressed, and she wore a gold chain that her son had sent her from America. The minister now grew formal in his manner. He spoke in a solemn and low voice. He directed Angus M’Eachran and Moira Fergus to stand up together; and then, with a closed Bible in his

hand, he placed himself before them, the three witnesses of the ceremony standing on one side. The light from the small window fell on the young Highland girl's face—she was now very pale, and she kept her eyes bent on the floor.

He began by offering up a prayer—a strange, rambling series of Biblical quotations, of entreaties, of exhortations addressed to those before him—which was at once earnest, pathetic, and grotesque. Mr. MacDonald would rather have prayed in the Gaelic; but the presence of the strangers led him to speak in English, which was obviously a difficulty to him. For into this curious prayer he introduced a sort of history and justification of what he had done with regard to the young people.

“Ay,” he said, “it wass to Glassgow they were going, and they would hef been as sheeps in the den of the lions, and as the young lambs among the wolves. For it iss written of Babylon the evil city, Lo, I will raise and cause to come up against



Babylon an assembly of the great nations from ta north country, ay, and Chaldea shall be a spoil. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about; all ye that will pend the pow shoot at her, ay, and spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord! And it wass to Glassgow they were going; and it wass no man could hear that and not safe them from going. And we had the great help of frients from far islands, ay, from the desolate places of the islands, and they came to us in our trouple, and it wass a great help they would gife to us, and the Lord will tek that into account, and reward them for the help they hef given to the young lad and the young lass that iss before us this tay."

Then he went on to denounce anger and evil passions as the cause of much of human trouble; and he closed his prayer with an earnest hope that Divine influence would soften the heart of John Fergus, and lead him to live in peace and affection with his daughter and her husband.



The exhortation following the prayer was shorter than the prayer. It referred chiefly to the duties of married life ; but even here Mr. MacDonald brought in a good deal of justification of his own conduct in having assisted a young lad and a young lass to get married.

“ Ay, ay,” said he, “ it iss written that a man shall leaf his father and his mother and ko and be joined unto his wife ; and the wife, too, she will do the same, as it hass peen from the peginning of the worlt. Amen. And why no ? And if there iss any man so foolish ass to say to a young man or a young lass, ‘ No, you will hef to wait until I die before you will be for getting marriet, and until I die you will not be for getting marriet at all,’ I will say to him that he is a foolish man, and a man who has no sense in his head whateffer. And there iss too much of the young men going away from the islands apout us, and they will go away to Glassgow, and to Greenock, and to America, and to other

places, and they will marry wives there, and who iss to know what kind of wifes they will marry ? No, it is petter, ay, and ferry much petter, for a young man to have seen a young lass in the years of her young tays, and he will know of her family, and he will hef seen her going to the church, and he will know she is a fit lass to be a wife for him and no strange woman that hass lifed in a great town, where there are wild men, and sodgers, and the Roman Catholic priests."

Presently the simple ceremony had to be performed ; and when Angus M'Eachran was bidden to take the young girl's hand, and when the minister demanded to know if any one were present who had aught to say against the marriage of these two there was a silence as if every one was listening for the sound of a footstep on the gravel outside.

There was no answer to that summons ; wherever John Fergus was, he was certainly not in the neighbourhood of Mr. MacDonald's manse.

“And so you are a married woman, Moira,” said Sheila, when it was all over.

The girl could not speak, but there were big tears in her eyes, and she went forward and took Mrs. Lavender’s hand and timidly kissed it. Angus M’Eachran had been standing about, silent and awkward; at length he, too, went forward, and said in desperation,—

“Mrs. Laffenter, it iss a ferry goot pair of oars for a small poat I hef made last week at Ardtilleach. Will I send you the oars to Borva?”

“Oh, no, Angus,” the young lady said; “that is ferry kind of you, but we have plenty of oars at Borva. But this is what I will be glad if you will do—it is a ferry good carpenter they say you are, and any day you have the time to make a small boat for a boy that he will be able to pull about with a string, then I will be ferry glad to have the boat from you.”

“Ay,” said Angus, with his face brightening,

“and will you tek the poat? Ay, ay, you will gife me time to mek the poat, and I will be ferry proud the day that you will tek the poat from me.”

Then he turned to the minister.

“And, Mr. MacDonald,” said he, rather shamefacedly, “if you will not be ferry angry, there is a gallon of goot whisky—oh, ay, it iss ferry goot whisky, I hef peen told—and I will pring it over this morning when I wass coming ofer, and I hef left it out in the heather—”

“You hef left it out in the heather!” said the minister angrily; “and it iss a foolish man you are, Angus M’Eachran, to go and leaf a gallon of goot whisky out on the heather? And where is the heather? And maybe you will go now and get it out of the heather?”

“I wass afrait to say about it pefore,” Angus said. “But I will go and get you the whisky, and it iss ferry proud I am that you will tak the

whisky—and it iss not ferry bad whisky mirover.”

As soon as Angus had gone off to the hiding-place of the jar, they all went outside into the clear air, which was fresh with the sea breeze and sweet with the smell of the peats.

“Sheila,” said Mr. Lavender, “can you hurry on Mr. MacDonald’s housekeeper? The great work of the day has to be done yet. And there will be little time to cross to Ardtilleach.”

“Oh, Mrs. Laffenter!” cried Moira. “You will not go to see my father!”

“Indeed, I will,” said Sheila. “Are you afraid he will eat me, Moira?”

“I am afraid—I do not know what I am afraid of—except that you will not go to him, that iss all I ask from you, Mrs. Laffenter—”

“The teffle—” exclaimed Mr. MacDonald fiercely, and then he recollected in whose society he was. “What iss it will keep Mrs. Laffenter



from speaking to any one? Your father iss an angry man, Moira Fergus—ay, you will be Moira M'Eachran now—he iss a very angry man—but will he use his pad language to Mrs. Laffenter? It iss not to be thought of, Moira!”

At this moment the yellow-bearded young fisherman came back with the jar of whisky; and he blushed a little as he handed the little present to the minister.

“Ay,” said Mr. MacDonald, going into the house. “Isabal must be ferry quick, for it iss a long way the way to Ardtilleach, and the second dinner of the tay it will be on poard the yacht at eight o'clock or seven o'clock, or petween poth of the two. And Isabal she must go town to the yacht and tell that tall Duncan of Mr. Mackenzie's to gife her the saddle for Mrs. Laffenter's horse.”

It was with great difficulty that they could persuade Angus and Moira to come into the house and sit down at the table with the great



people from Borvabost. Mr. MacDonald of himself could never have managed it; but Sheila took Moira by the hand and led her into the room, and then the young husband silently followed.

The minister had been too modest in speaking of the banquet he had had prepared for his guests. He had promised them but mutton and whisky; and, behold! there was a bottle of claret-wine on the table, and the very first dish was the head and shoulders of a magnificent salmon.

“Well, that is a fine fish!” said Mr. Lavender, regarding its mighty proportions.

“Oh, ay,” said the minister, immensely flattered. “He wass a fine fish—a grand fish. He wass ass big as a dog—and more.”

It was a great grief to the minister that Mr. Lavender would not taste of the claret, which had come all the way from Stornoway, and was of so excellent a vintage that it was named after

the Prime Minister in Parliament himself. But Sheila had some of it in a tumbler, and pronounced it very good, though the minister observed that "there wass no great strength to go to the head in the French wines," and he "wass ferry much surprised to see that Mrs. Laffenter would hef water with the claret-wine."

"And I hear that Angus is going to build a cottage for you, Moira," said Mrs. Lavender, "further removed from the village and the curing-houses. That will be ferry good for you; and it is not every one that has a husband who can work at two trades, and be a good fisherman on the sea, and a good carpenter on shore. And I suppose you will be going back now to the house that he has at present."

"Ay, that iss the worst of it," said the girl sadly. "If my father iss ferry angry, it will be a pad thing that we will hef to lif in Ardtilleach together; and all the neighbours will know that

he is angry, and he will hef the long story to tell to each of them."

"But you must not look at it that way," her counsellor said cheerfully. "You will soon get over your father's anger ; and the neighbours—well, the neighbours are likely to take your side of the story, if there is a story. Now, you must keep up your spirits, Moira ; it is a bad thing for a young wife to be downhearted, for a man will soon tire of that, because he may not understand the cause of it. And why should you be downhearted ? I dare say, now, that when you come over to Ardtilleach—you will not be long after us, I suppose—you will find the neighbours ready to hef a dance over the wedding as soon as the evening comes on."

As there was little time to be lost on the part of those who were coming back the same evening to the yacht, the small and shaggy animal that was to carry Mrs. Lavender to Ardtilleach was brought round to the door.

The young bride and bridegroom, with somewhat wistful eyes, saw their ambassadress set out, her husband walking smartly by her side.

“It iss a great thing they hef undertaken to do,” said the minister, “ay, and if they cannot do it, there iss not any one in all the islands will be able to do it.”

## CHAPTER VI.

HABET !

ABOUT one o'clock of the day on which Moira Fergus was married, her father returned home from the curing-house for his dinner. He was surprised to find no one inside the small cottage. There were the usual preparations, certainly—a loaf of bread and jug of milk on the side-table, and the big black pot hung high over the smouldering peats. He was angry that she should not be there ; but he had no thought of what had occurred.

In a sullen mood he proceeded to get for himself his dinner. He lowered the black pot and raked up the peats ; then, when the steam began to rise, he helped himself, and sate down to the table. Moira should pay for this.

But by and by, as the time passed, and there was no Moira, he began to be suspicious ; and he had not well finished his dinner when he started off, with a dark look on his face, for the cottage in which Angus M'Eachran lived. There was an old woman who acted in some measure the part of cook and housekeeper for Angus—a bent, shrivelled old woman, more sulky even than John Fergus himself.

“Is Angus M'Eachran in the house ?” said he, in the Gaelic.

“Is Angus M'Eachran in the house !” she retorted contemptuously.

“I ask you if he is in the house !” he said angrily.

“And it is a foolish man you are to ask such a question !” the old woman said, quite as fiercely.

“As if a young man will be in the house in the middle of the day, when all the young men will be at the fishing.”

With a petulant oath, Fergus went past her



and walked into the cottage. There was no one inside.

Then, with his suspicions growing momentarily stronger, he walked away from Ardtilleach, until, at one point of the coast, he reached the school which did service for the whole of the island. He went inside and spoke to the schoolmaster, Alistair Lewis ; and Moira's younger sisters were called aside and questioned. They knew nothing of her.

Then he went back to Ardtilleach, and by this time there was a great commotion in the village, for it was known that Moira Fergus could not be found, and that her father was seeking everywhere for her. The old women came out of the hovels, and the old men came in from the potato fields, and the small children listened, wondering, but understanding nothing.

“ Ay, ay, it iss a ferry angry man he is, and the young lass will hef many a hard word from him ; and if she will go away, what iss the

reason of it that she should not go away?" said one.

"And there iss no finer lad in the islands than Angus M'Eachran," said another; "and him ferry goot at mendin' a poat, and ferry goot at the fishin' too and mirover; and it iss a foolish man John Fergus iss that he will think the lass will never marry."

"Ay, ay," said one old man, coming up with an armful of smoke-saturated roofing, which he was about to carry to one of the small fields, "and iss it known that Angus M'Eachran will not go out with the poat this morning, and young Tonalld Neil, he will go out with the poat, and that wass what I will see myself when I wass coming from Harrabost."

This was news indeed, and it was made the basis of a thousand conjectures. Moira Fergus and Angus M'Eachran had gone away from Darroch, and caught up one of the schooners making for the Lewis. They were on their way

to Stornoway ; and from Stornoway they would go to Glasgow or America ; and John Fergus would see his daughter Moira no more.

When John Fergus made his appearance, these gossipers were silent, for there was anger on his face, and they feared him.

“ You hef not seen Moira ? ” said he.

“ No,” answered one and all.

“ Hef you seen Angus M’Eachran, then ? ”

“ This iss what I will tell you, John Fergus,” said the old man, who had laid down his bundle of black straw. “ It wass Tonalld Neil he will be for going out this morning in the poat, and Angus M’Eachran he wass not in the poat, and it iss many a one will say now that if Angus M’Eachran and Moira hef gone away to Styornoway—”

“ They hef not gone to Styornoway ! ” exclaimed Fergus. “ It iss a fool that you are, Peter Taggart, to speak of Styornoway ! ”

But at this moment the group of idlers was

moved by a new surprise ; for who should appear at the further end of the village than the daughter of Mr. Mackenzie, the king of the far island of Borva, and she was coming along on horseback, with her husband, a tall young Englishman, by her side. What could this wonderful portent mean? Were they on their way to visit Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, who was a clever man and a travelled man, and had been to Stornoway, and Glasgow, and other distant places.

They saw her, while as yet she was some distance off, dismount from the horse, and then her husband led the animal until he found a post, to which he tied the bridle. Then these two came along together, and the village people thought she resembled a queen, and had the dress of a queen, and the air of a queen.

“And where is the house of John Fergus?” said she, when she came up, to an old woman.

The old woman was rather taken aback by this

great honour, and she hurriedly dropped a curtsey, and exclaimed,—

“Ay, iss it John Fergus? And here is John Fergus himself!”

Moira’s father was standing apart, with sullen brows. He had a dim suspicion that this unexpected visit had something to do with the disappearance of his daughter.

“Mr. Fergus,” said Sheila, going forward to him, and speaking to him in a low voice, “it is a long time since I hef been at Ardtilleach, and I had forgotten you.”

“Ay,” said he, not very courteously.

“But I had not forgotten your daughter Moira.”

There was a quick, suspicious glance in the deep-set eyes; the man said nothing.

“Now, Mr. Fergus, I am going to ask you to be a kind man and a reasonable man this day. And it is a very simple thing I hef to tell you. It was last week that Mr. MacDonald, the minis-



ter, came to Borva, and he was saying that Angus M'Eachran and your daughter Moira, they would like to be married, and that you were against it—"

"Iss it against it you will say?" he broke in fiercely. "I would like to see—"

"Let me speak to you, Mr. Fergus," said the young lady gently. "Well, Angus and Moira did not see any use in waiting, for they knew you would never consent, and I believe they had determined to run away from Darroch and go to Glasgow—"

"And hef they gone to Glasgow?" demanded Fergus in a voice that was heard even by the neighbours, who had remained at a respectful distance.

"No, they hef not. The minister thought, and I thought, that would be a very bad thing. I said you were a reasonable man, Mr. Fergus, and I would go to you and speak with you, and you would listen to it, and you would understand



that a young girl does no wrong in thinking of getting married—”

“Where iss Moira?” said he suddenly. “You—you hef taken her away—ay, that iss it—it iss a ferry grand laty you are, but if you hef taken away Moira Fergus—”

“Mr. Fergus,” said Sheila’s husband, stepping forward, “I strongly advise you to be a little more civil.”

“And you!” said he, turning fiercely on this new assailant, “what iss it to you that I will hef command ofer my own house? And what iss it to you to come and touch such things? And I say to you, where is Moira?”

Mr. Lavender would have replied, and, doubtless, with injudicious vehemence, but Sheila interposed.

“I will tell you where she is, Mr. Fergus,” she said quietly. “Now you will be a reasonable man, and you will see how it is better to make the best of what is done; and Moira is a

good lass, and—and—she is coming now to Ardtilleach, and Angus too, and it was over at Mr. MacDonald's manse to-day they were—and you will be a reasonable man, Mr. Fergus—”

“At the manse !” he cried, seeing the whole thing. “And they were married ?”

“Well, yes, indeed, Mr. Fergus—”

At this confirmation of his suspicions his rage became quite uncontrollable, and he suddenly broke upon Sheila with a flood of vituperation in Gaelic. Her husband could not understand a word, but he saw the girl retreat a step, with her face pale.

He sprang forward.

“Speak English, you hound, or I'll kick you down to the shore and back again !” he cried.

“Iss it English ?” Fergus shouted in his rage. “Iss it English ? Ay, it iss the English thieves coming about the islands to steal when the door is left open ! And it iss you, Sheila Mackenzie, it iss you that will answer for this—”

In his ungovernable passion he had raised his clenched fist in the air, and inadvertently he advanced a step. Probably he had not the least intention in the world of striking Sheila, but the threatening gesture was quite enough for her husband; so that, quick as lightning, he dealt John Fergus a blow right on the forehead which sent him staggering backward until he tripped and fell heavily. There was a scream from the old women, who came running forward to the prostrate man. Mr. Lavender turned to his wife, his face a trifle pale.

"Are your nerves fluttered, Sheila?" he said. "Come over to this bench here, and sit down. Will you have a drop of whisky?"

Sheila was indeed trembling; she suffered herself to be led to the wooden bench, and there she sate down.

"Have you hurt him?" she said, in a low voice.

"Certainly," said he. "I have hurt him, and

my own knuckles as well. But he'll come to, all right. Don't you mind him."

Mr. Lavender walked back to the group of people. John Fergus was sitting up in the middle of the road, looking considerably dazed.

"Here, some of you folks, get me a drop of whisky, and a clean glass, and some water."

The request was attended to at once.

"Well, John Fergus," said Mr. Lavender, "you'll keep a more civil tongue in your head next time I pay you a visit."

He went back to his wife and prevailed on her to take a little whisky and water to steady her nerves.

"It is a bad thing you hef done," she said sadly. "He will never forgive them now."

"He never would have forgiven them," replied the husband. "I saw that at once. Your appeals were only making him more frantic. Besides, do you think I would allow, in any case,

a cantankerous old fool like that to swear at you in his beast of a language ?”

“ You did not know he was swearing.”

“ I knew very well.”

“ And what shall we do now ?”

“ Why, go back again—that’s all. We shall meet the young folks on the road.”

“ We cannot go away till you see how John Fergus is.”

“ Oh, John Fergus is right enough—see, there he goes, slinking off to one of the cottages, probably his own. A little rest will do him good, and let his temper cool. Now, Sheila, pull yourself together ; you’ve got to entertain a distinguished guest on board the yacht this evening, and we must not lose time.”

Sheila rose and took her husband’s arm. As they walked along to the post where the horse was tied, the villagers came up to them, and more than one said,—

“ Ay, ay, sir, it wass ferry well done, and a



ferry goot thing whateffer, that you will teach John Fergus to keep a civil tongue, and he is a ferry coorse man, and no one will dare to say anything to him. Ay, and to think that he would speak like that to Miss Sheila Mackenzie—it wass well done, ay, and ferry well done.”

“But he is not hurt?” Sheila said.

“Well, he iss hurt, ay, and he iss not hurt; but he will be going to lie down, and when he gets up again, then there will be nothing; but he iss ferry wake on the legs, and there iss no more anger now for the rest of this day whateffer.”

So Mr. and Mrs. Lavender went away from Ardtilleach, the latter rather downhearted over the failure of her enterprise, the former endeavouring to convince her that that might have been expected, and that no great harm had been done. Indeed, when, in crossing the lonely moorland road, they saw Angus M’Eachran and Moira Fergus at a great distance, coming toward them, Sheila “lifted up her voice and wept,” and



it was in vain that her husband tried to comfort her. She dismounted from the saddle, and sate down on a block of silver-grey granite by the roadside, to await Moira's coming; and, when the young Highland girl came up, she could scarcely speak to her. Moira was infinitely perturbed to see this great lady grieved because of her, and, when she heard all that had happened, she said sadly,—

“But that iss what I hef expected, and there wass no other thing that I hef expected. If there wass any chance of getting a smooth word from my father, do you think, Mrs. Laffenter, that Angus M'Eachran and me we would be for going away to Glassgow?”

“It is a bad home-coming after the wedding that you will hef,” said her friend.

“Yes, indeed, but we hef looked for that; and it iss a great thing you hef done for us, Mrs. Laffenter, in coming all the way from Borva to the wedding; but we will not forget that; and

it will be remembered in the island for many a day. And now you will be for going on to the manse, Mrs. Laffenter.

“Moirá,” said her friend, “we are going away to London in a day or two now, and I would like to hef a word from you, and you or Angus will send me a letter, to tell me what is going on in Darroch.”

“Indeed, yes,” said Angus, “and they will know you ferry well in London if we send the letter, or iss there more ass one of the same name in London?”

“You must have the address,” said Mr. Laverder, getting out a card.

“Oh, I know the attress ferry well,” said the young fisherman; “iss there any one so foolish ass not to know where London iss? And they will tek the letter ferry well?”

“Yes, but you must put more than London on the letter, for there are more people in a street in London than in all Darroch and Killeena, and

there are as many streets as there are stones in your house, Angus."

He looked at the card as if it were some strange talisman; then he put it in his pocket; there was a little hand-shaking, and the bride and bridegroom went on their way.

"Moira!" Mrs. Lavender called out suddenly.

The girl turned and came back; she was met half way by her friend, who had a great sympathy and sadness in her eyes.

"It is ferry sorry for you I am this day," said Sheila, in a low voice, "and there is not anything I would not do to hef got for you a better home-coming. And you will speak to your father, Moira—not now, when he is in his anger—but afterwards, and perhaps he will see that what is done is done, and he will be friends with you."

"I will try that, Mrs. Laffenter," said the girl.

"And you will send me a letter to London?"

“ Oh, ay, I will send you the letter to London, and it will be a proud day for me the day that I will send you a letter ; and you will not say a word of it to any one, Mrs. Laffenter, if there iss not the ferry goot English in the letter, for it iss Angus he can write the goot English petter ass me.”

“ Your English will be good enough, Moira,” said her friend. “ Good-bye.”

So again they parted ; and that was the last these two saw of each other for many long days and months.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE FIRST CLOUD.

It was well on in the afternoon when Angus M'Eachran and his young wife reached Ardtilleach; and by that time one or two of the boats had come in from the ling fishing; so that there were a good many people about. And there was a great commotion in the place over the news of what had happened—a commotion such as had not shaken Ardtilleach since the foundering of the French schooner on Harrabost Head. Moreover, two or three of the young fellows took solemn oath in the Gaelic that they would not allow Angus M'Eachran's wedding to pass over without a dance and a dram, whatever was thought of it by John Fergus, who remained sullen, sour, and ashamed in his own home.

There was a great deal of hand-shaking when the bride and bridegroom arrived ; and many were the good wishes expressed by the old women about the future of Moira. The young girl was grateful ; but her eyes kept wandering about the place, apparently seeking for her father.

There was no time to organize a great entertainment, as was done when Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, married Ailasa MacDonald, a young lass from Killeena ; but one of the curers—the very curer, indeed, who was John Fergus’s master—came forward in a handsome manner, and said that if two or three of the young fellows would begin and roll some barrels aside, he would tender the use of his curing-house, so that some frugal supper and a dance might be possible. This was done in due time, and Angus’s companions set to work to hold some little feast in his honour. One went away, declaring that he would himself, as sure as he



was a living man, bring six gallons of whisky to the curing-house. Another, a famous musician, went off for his fiddle. Another declared that it would be a shame, and a very great shame, if Alistair Lewis were not told of the approaching celebration, and immediately set out for the school-house. Then the boys about obtained permission from old Donald Neil to gather the potato-shaws out of his field, and these they brought to the point of the shore outside the curing-house, so that, when night came, a mighty bonfire and beacon should tell even the ships out at sea that great doings were going on on land.

Angus M'Eachran was very proud of all this, and very glad to be among his own people again. The ceremony over there at the Free Church Manse had rather frightened him ; now he felt at home ; and, having drunk a glass or two, he was as anxious for a dance as any one. But with Moira the case was very different. Of

all the crowd, she was the only one who was anxious, sad, and preoccupied. She had none of the quick laughter of a bride.

“Ay, and what iss the matter with you, Moira?” said her husband.

“There iss nothing the matter with me, Angus,” she replied; but the wistful and anxious look did not depart from her face.

Well, there was not much of a supper that night, and, indeed, many did not go into the curing-house at all, but remained outside, where dancing had already begun on a rocky plateau, covered with short sea-grass. It was a lovely night—the wonderful glow of the northern twilight shining over the dark heavens, and the stars gradually becoming more distinct on the smooth surface of the sea. There was a fresher air out here on the rocks than in the heated curing-house, and the whisky was as good outside as in.

Then a great shout arose, for the boys had

put a light to the bonfire, and presently the long, lithe tongues of fire began to leap up, while the young men took to performing feats of jumping through the flames. In the excitement of the moment the curer, who had had a glass, became reckless, and ordered the boys to bring a heap of driftwood from the curing-house. Then, indeed, there was a bonfire—such a bonfire as the shores of Darroch and Killeena had never seen before. There was a great noise and confusion, of course, friend calling to friend, and the old women trying to prevent the boys from springing through the flames.

In the midst of all this noise Moira slipped away from the side of her husband. She had been inside the curing-house, and there her health and the health of her husband had been loyally drunk, and she had gone round the whole company, shaking hands with each, while she said “Shlainte!” and put her lips to the whisky. The cry of “The fire!” of course

called every one out, and in the crowd she was separated from her husband. She seized this opportunity.

The great red glare was shining athwart the hollows in the rock, and even lighting up palely the fronts of the cottages of Ardtilleach, so that she had not much fear for her footing as she passed over to the road. There seemed to be no one left in Ardtilleach. There was not a sound to be heard—nothing but the distant voices of the people calling to each other round the bonfire. All the fishermen, and the young women, and the old folks, and the children had gone out to the point.

Moirá went rapidly along the cottages till she came to her father's, her heart beating hurriedly. When she reached the door a cry of fright had nearly escaped her, for there was her father—his face partly lit up by the reflection of the red light—sternly regarding her. He did not move to let her pass into the house. He did not say a word

to her ; he only looked at her as if she were a dog, a boat, a piece of stone. Rather than this terrible reception, she would have had him break out into a fury of rage.

She was not prepared for it ; and after the first wild look of entreaty, she turned her eyes to the ground, and stood there, trembling and speechless.

“ Hef you no word for me ? ” she said at length.

“ None ! ” he answered.

He seemed to be regarding the distant bonfire, its long shoots of flame into the black night, and the alternate dusky and red figures moving round it.

“ It wass many a time,” she began, in desperation, hoping to make some excuse ; “ it wass many a time, I will say to you—”

“ I hef no word for you, Moira Fergus,” her father said with apparent indifference. “ You hef gone away ; you will stay away. It iss a



disgrace you hef brought on yourself and your family—”

“A disgrace!” she cried. “And what are the people doing, then, if they think it iss a disgrace I hef made? That iss not in the thoughts of any one of them.”

“The people!” said her father, for a second forgetting his forced composure. “And the teffle knows what the people will be after—it iss the whisky; and after they hef the whisky they will go home, and to-morrow what will they say of you, Moira Fergus?”

“They will say no harm of me,” the girl said. “But you, yourself, father, you will say no harm of me; and if we can be friends, and Angus will come to you and say—”

“Do you hear what I hef told you?” said he fiercely. “I hef no word to speak to you—no, not if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years. To-morrow you will be to me as if you wass dead; to-morrow, and the next day, and



all the years after that. You hef gone away ; ay, and you shall stay away, Moira Fergus ! I hef no more speaking for you, nor for Angus M'Eachran ; and it iss a foolish man Angus M'Eachran will be if he comes near me or my house."

" Father—only this—"

" I tell you, Moira Fergus, to go away ; or, by Kott, I will tek you, and I will trag you out to the curing-house, and put you among your trunken frients ! That iss what I will do, by Kott !"

His vehemence frightened her ; she went back a step, and then she looked at him. He turned and went inside the cottage. Then there was nothing for the girl but to go back to her friends, whose shouts still resounded through the silence of the night.

" Ay, and where hef you been, Moira ?" her husband said, he alone having noticed her absence.

"I wass down to my father's house," she answered sadly.

"And what will he say to you?"

"He hass no word for me. To-morrow, and the next day, and all the time after that, I will be just as one that iss dead to him ; ay, ay, sure enough."

"And what of that?" her husband said. "Tit you not know that pefore? And what iss the harm of it? It is a ferry goot thing indeed and mirover that you will be away from a coorse man, that wass ferry terriple to you and to all his neighbours. And it iss ferry little you hef to complain apout, Moira ; and now you will come and hef a tance."

"It iss not any tance I will be thinking about," said the girl.

He became a little impatient.

"In the name of Kott, what iss it you will want, Moira ! It iss a strange thing to hef a young lass going apout ferry sorrowful on the

tay of her wedding. And it iss many a one will say that you are not ferry glad of the wedding."

That was true enough. It was remarked that, whereas everybody was ready for a dance and a song, only Moira seemed to care nothing for the dance and the song. But the old women knew the reason of it; and one said to the other,—

"Ay, ay, it iss a hard thing for a young lass to go away from her own home to get marriet, and it iss ferry strange she will be for a time, and then she will heed that no more. But Moira Fergus, it iss ferry pad for Moira Fergus that her father iss a coorse and a wild man, and she will hef no chance of being frients with him any more; and the young lass—well, she is a young lass—and that will trouple a young lass, indeed and mirover."

But these shrewd experiences had no hold of Angus M'Eachran. His quick Celtic tempera-

ment resented the affront put upon him, on his very wedding day, by the girl whom he had married. The neighbours saw she was anything but glad; and the young man had it in his heart to say, "Moirá, if you are sorry for the wedding, I am too; and sorrier still that I cannot go and have it undone." He moved away from her.

By this time the tumult round the bonfire had subsided, for now nothing but smouldering ashes were left, and the people had formed again into dancing groups, and talking groups, and drinking groups—perhaps the first two ought to be included in the third. Angus M'Eachran would not dance at all; but he had recovered his temper, and once or twice he went and said a friendly word to Moira, who was standing with some of the old women looking on at the reels. But what had fired this other young fellow to call out,—

"Hey! there is one man not here this day,

and, by Kott, he ought to be here this day. And he iss a foolish man and a madman that will stay at home when his own daughter is being marriet !”

“ Ay, ay,” said two or three.

“ And this iss what I say,” continued the fisherman, who had evidently had a glass. “ I am going ofer to John Fergus’s house !”

“ Ay, and me too,” responded one or two of his companions.

“ And we will hef a joke with him,” cried one.

“ Ay, ay, and we will hef him out !” cried another.

“ We will put a light to his thatch !” cried a third. “ And you will see if John Fergus will not come out to his daughter’s wedding !”

At this, Moira darted forward before them.

“ If there iss one of you,” she said in an excited way, “ if there iss one of you will go near to my father’s house this night, this iss what I



will do—I will go and jump ofer the rock there into the water.”

“ Ay, ay,” said her husband, coming forward rather gloomily, “ it iss no use the having a joke with John Fergus. Let John Fergus alone. If he will not come out to his daughter’s wedding, that is nothing to any one—it iss a ferry goot thing there are others that hef come to the wedding, and ass for John Fergus, he will be ferry welcome to stay at home this night, or the next night, or the next fife huntret years, and tam him ! ”

So that matter passed over, and the merry-making was resumed—the fiddler having illimitable calls on him, and the very oldest determined to show that they had not altogether lost the use of toe and heel. There was no lack of whisky ; and altogether the improvised entertainment in honour of the wedding of Moira Fergus became a notable and memorable thing. But there were two or three present who re-



marked that Moira looked very sorrowful ; and that Angus M'Eachran was not so well pleased with her as a husband should be with his newly-married wife.

## CHAPTER VIII,

## AN INTERMEDDLER,

JOHN FERGUS kept his word ; his daughter was as one dead to him. When he passed her in the village, he had neither look nor speech for her ; and then she went home with a heavy heart. At first her husband tried to reason with her about her unavailing silence and sadness ; but he soon got tired of that, and impatient, and glad to be out with his companions in the boat, or on the beach, where a laugh and a joke was possible.

“ What, in the name of Kott, iss the use of it, Moira ? ” he would say to her, when he was near losing his temper. “ Hef you not known all along that your father, John Fergus, would hef no word for you if you wass to go and get

married? Hef I not told you that? And it wass many a time you will say to me, ‘Angus, I cannot stay longer in the house with my father;’ and then I hef said to you, ‘Moirra, it will be a ferry tifferent thing when you hef a house to yourself, and you will be the mistress of the house and no one will speak a coorse word to you.’ And now you hef no more thought of that—you hef no more thought of anything but your father—and this iss what I will say to you, Moirra, that no man hass the patience with a wife who is discontented from the morning to the night, and it iss many’s the time I hef wished you could go back to your father—and tam him!”

In due course of time, and in fulfilment of her promise, Moirra sate down one day and wrote a letter to Mrs. Lavender, who was still in London. This letter she brought to her husband, asking him to address it for her, and hinting that he might look through it, for she was better at

spelling the Gaelic than the English. Angus got a pen and sate down.

He had not read far when an angry light came to his eyes. Moira's letter to her friend was not the letter which a young wife might be expected to write. It was very sad and mournful ; and it was all about her father, and the impossibility of conciliating him. There was not a word in it of her husband, or of his project of building a cottage with a slate roof, or of the recent state of the fishing around the coast. It was all her father, and her father, and her father ; and the young fisherman's face grew dark. Finding that she had gone outside, he got another piece of paper and wrote as follows :—

“ This is what Moira haz to tell to you, Mrs. Laffenter, and this is all she haz to tell to you, and it is not ferra much whatever. But there is another word I would say to you that Moira haz not said, and when a man marries a wife, it is not to be triffen out of the house that he will

marry a wife, and this is what haz come to us, that Moira she will think of nothing from the morning to the night but the quarrel with John Fergus, and it is not any other thing she will think of, and there is no man will haf the patience with that. And that is how we are, Mrs. Laffenter, and you will not trouple yourself to say a word of it to Moira, for I haf said a great many things to her; but it is no use there is in them, and all the day she will haf no word for me, and no laugh or a joke like a young lass, and it is the Gott's mercy there will be one or two young men about or I would go away to Glassgow indeed and mirover. And you waz ferra kind to us, Mrs. Laffenter, and it is no great gladness I haf in telling you the story, but I waz thinking if you got Moira's letter you would be for writing to John Fergus, and there will be no use in that at all. And I am your obedient servant to command, Angus M'Eachran. The feshen haz been ferra good round about

Darroch since you waz here, but a man haz no heart to go to the feshen when he comes back to a discontented house."

He did not show Moira that second letter—he knew that remonstrance was of no avail; he merely inclosed it in the same envelope and addressed that to Mrs. Lavender in London.

A day or two afterwards Mr. MacDonald, the minister, came over to Ardtilleach, and on such occasions he invariably went first to the house of Angus M'Eachran. Angus had never complained to him; but the minister had got to imagine that there was something wrong; and occasionally he was rather disturbed about it, for he held himself as partly responsible for the marriage of these young people. This time he found Moira alone.

"And are you ferry well, Moira?" said he, looking at her keenly.

He could see that the girl had recently been crying.



“ Oh, ay, Mr. MacDonald ; and are you ferry well too ? And it iss a fine tay you hef got to come ofer to Ardtilleach.”

“ And iss Angus gone out to the fishing ? ”

“ I do not know that,” she said.

“ You do not know that ? ” said the minister.  
“ Well, well, the tays are ferry much altered now ; for in the former tays a young wife would go outside the house, or go down to the rocks, to say good-bye to her husband when he wass going out to the fishing ; but you are ferry much in the house, Moira.”

“ And that iss true, Mr. MacDonald,” she answered ; “ and why should I not be ferry much in the house ? Iss it a goot thing for me to go out into the fillage, and my father he will go by without a word to me, and all the neighbours will see it ? Yes, I am ferry much in the house, Mr. MacDonald.”

“ Well,” said he, “ it iss not a goot thing that you tell me ; but you wass always saying, Moira,

that you would be petter away from the coorse tongue of your father ; and now that you are away, iss it any use being ferry sorry for that, and you a young lass that ought to be ferry prout of a young husband, and one that iss as cleffer with his fingers ass Angus M'Eachran ? No, no, Moira, you hef no right to mek such complaints."

"I do not complain at all, Mr. MacDonald," the girl answered. "No, it iss no use in complaining, none at all."

The minister regarded her for a second or two ; he did not quite know how far he would be justified in interfering.

"Well, I am going on to the school-house, Moira," said he, "to see Alister Lewis apout his frients the MacIntyres, who will be thinking of going away to America ; and when I come back to Ardtilleach again, Moira, I will come in and say good-bye to you."

So he went on his way. But he had not got

a quarter of a mile away from the village when, to his great surprise, he saw Angus M'Eachran sitting out on the rocks over the sea, in the company of old Donald Neil, and both of them making very merry indeed, as he heard from their laughing. The minister crossed over to them. They were seated on the dry turf of the rocks ; and there was a black bottle and a single glass between them.

“And are you ferry well, Angus?” said the minister. “And you, Donald Neil? And it wass no thought of seeing you, Angus, that I had this tay. You are not at the fishing?”

“No,” said the young man, with some embarrassment. “A man cannot always be going to the fishing.”

“I do not think,” said the minister, “no, I do not think, Angus M'Eachran, there iss any young man but yourself in the whole of Ard-tilleach this tay—except the young men in the curing-houses.”

“ Well, well ! ” said Angus shortly ; “ iss there any one of the young men hass been so often to the fishing ass I hef been, and where iss the one that hass ass much money in the bank at Styornoway ? ”

“ Ay, ay,” said the minister, “ that iss a goot thing, and a fery goot thing, mirover ; and you will find the goot of the money when you will pegin to puild the cottage with the slate roof. But the money will not get any the bigger, Angus M’Eachran, if you will stay at home on the fine tays for the fishing, ay, and if you will sit out on the rocks trinking whisky in the middle of the tay ! ”

The minister had grown a trifle vehement.

“ There iss no harm in a glass,” said Angus M’Eachran gloomily.

“ There iss no harm in a glass ! ” retorted Mr. MacDonald with impatience. “ There iss no harm in a glass—ay, I know there iss no great harm in a glass if you will meet with a frient, and when the work iss tone, and then there iss

no harm in a glass. But there iss a harm, and a ferry great harm, in it, Angus M'Eachran, if a young man will gife up his work, and tek to trinking in the middle of the tay—and not a glass, no, but a bottle—and it iss too much whisky you hef trank this tay, Angus M'Eachran."

The young man made no protestation, no excuse. He sate moodily contemplating the rocks before him. His companion, the father of the young man who had taken Angus's place in the boat, was uncomfortably conscious of guilt, and remained silent.

"I do not know," Angus said at length, "I do not know, Mr. MacDonald, that I will go any more to the fishing."

"Hey!" cried the minister, "and iss it a madman you are, Angus M'Eachran? And what will you do, then, that you will go no more to the fishing?"

"It iss the son of Tonalld Neil, here, who will pay me for my share in the poat, and he iss a



ferry goot fisherman, and the other men will be ferry glat to hef him in the poat."

"Ay, and you?" said the minister, "what iss it you will do yourself, Angus M'Eachran?"

"I do not know," he said gloomily. "It iss not anything I hef the heart to do, unless it will be to go away to Glassgow; there iss not any thing else I hef the heart to do."

"To Glassgow!" cried the minister, in angry excitement; "you, Angus M'Eachran! Ay, it iss once before I will stop you from going to Glassgow!"

"And that was ferry well done!" said the young fisherman, with a bitter laugh, "and there wass much goot came of it, that we did not go away to Glassgow. Well, Mr. MacDon-ald, I will say nothing against you for that. It iss no fault to you that Moira and me—well, it iss not any use the speaking of it."

The minister turned to the old man.

"Tonald Neil, get up on your feet, and go



away ofer to the road there. It iss a few words I hef to say to Angus M'Eachran."

The old man rose with some difficulty, and hobbled away over the rocks. No sooner had he gone than the minister, with an angry look in his face, caught up the black bottle, dashed it down on the rocks below, where the remaining whisky spurted about in all directions.

"The teffle—and tam him !—tek effery drop of the whisky you will trink in the tays when you should be at the fishing, Angus M'Eachran, and you with a young wife—"

"A young wife !" cried the fisherman bitterly (paying no attention to the destruction of the whisky) ; "it iss no young wife I hef, Mr. MacDonald. It iss a young lass I hef marriyet—yes, that iss true enough whateffer—but it iss a young lass that hass no thought for her husband, and hass no laugh or a joke at any time, and that sits by herself all the day, with her crying, and her tiscontent, and will say no word

when you reason with her ; and iss that a young wife ? No, py Kott, Mr. MacDonald, that iss no young wife—and why should I go to the fishing ? ”

“ Ay, ay, Angus M’Eachran,” said the minister, “ this iss a ferry pad story you hef told me this day, and it wass no thought of this I had when you were married ofer at the manse, and when Mrs. Laffenter will come back in the evening, and when she was ferry sorry that John Fergus wass an angry man, I will be saying to her, ‘ Mrs. Laffenter, it wass effery one knew that pefore ; and it wass no shame to you, and no fault to you, that he wass still a foolish man. And Moira Fergus, she will be petter, ay, and ferry much petter, to go and lif with Angus M’Eachran than with John Fergus, and it iss a ferry goot thing you hef done this tay, and it iss ferry kind of you to come all the way from Borva.’ ”

“ Ay, ay,” said Angus, “ that wass well said,

Mr. MacDonald ; for who could hef told that this would come out of it ? ”

“ But you must hef patience with the lass, Angus,” the minister said, “ and you will say a word to her—”

“ I will say a word to her ! ” exclaimed Angus, with a flash of fire in his eyes. “ Iss it one word, or fife huntret tousant words I hef said to her ? No, I will say no more words to her—there hass been too much of that mirover. It iss to Glassgow I am going, and then she will go back to her father—and tam him ! ”

“ Then you will be a wicket man, Angus M’Eachran ! ” exclaimed the minister, “ ay, a foolish and a wicket man, to think of such things ! And what will you do in Glassgow ? ”

“ I do not know.”

“ No, you do not know ! You will take to the whisky, that iss what you will do in Glassgow. Angus M’Eachran, I tell you to put that out of your head ; and when I come back from

the school-house, ay, I will go and see Moira, and I will say a word to her, but not any word of your going to Glassgow, which iss a foolish thing for a young man to think of."

He did as he had promised ; and on the second time of his entering Angus M'Eachran's house he again found Moira alone, though she was now engaged in some domestic work.

" Well, well," he said to her, " it iss a goot thing for a young wife to be tiligent, and look after the house ; but there iss more ass that that iss wanted of a young wife—and I hef just seen Angus M'Eachran, Moira."

" Ay," said the girl rather indifferently ; " and hass he not gone out to the fishing ? "

" No, he hass not gone out to the fishing ; and this iss what I hef to say to you, Moira, that unless you take care, ay, and ferry great care, ay, he will go out to the fishing not any more.'

She looked up quickly, and in fear.

" Is Angus ill ? "

“ Ill ! Ay, he is ill ; but it iss not in his pody that he iss ill. He iss a fine, strong young man, and there iss many a young lass would hef been glad to hef Angus M’Eachran for her husband ; and now that he iss marriet, it wass you, Moira, that should be a good wife to him. And do you know why he is not at the fishing ? It iss bekass he hass no heart to go to the fishing. And why should a young man hef no care for his work and his house ?—unless this, Moira, that the house is not agreaple to him.”

The girl sighed.

“ I know that, Mr. MacDonald,” she said. “ It iss many’s the time Angus will say that to me.”

“ And in Kott’s name, then, Moira,” said the minister indignantly, “ why will you not mek the house lighter for him ? Iss it nothing to you that your husband will hef a dull house, ay, and a house that will trife him into idleness such as



no young man in Ardtilleach would speak of? Iss it nothing to you, Moira?"

The girl turned to him, with her eyes full of tears.

"Iss it nothing to me, Mr. MacDonald? Ay, it iss a great teal to me. And it iss many the time I will say to myself that I will heed no more the quarrel with my father, and that if he will go by in the fillage without a look or a word, that will be nothing to me. But it iss ferry easy, Mr. MacDonald, to say such things to yourself; and it iss not so ferry easy for a young lass to hef a quarrel with her father, and that all the neiphours will see there iss a quarrel, and not a look or a word between them not any more ass if they wass stranchers to each other. Ay, ay, that iss no light thing for a young lass—"

"Well, I hef no patience with you, Moira," said the minister. "Wass not all this pefore you when you wass getting marriet?"

"Ay," said the girl, with another sigh, "that



iss a true word. But there are many things that you will expect, and you will not know what they are until they hef come to you, Mr. MacDonald—and—and—”

“ Well, well, well ! ” said the minister, rather testily, “ now that it hass come to you, Moira, what iss the use of fretting, and fretting, and fretting—”

“ There iss not any use in it, Mr. MacDonald,” she said simply. “ But it iss not effery one will be aple to put such things out of the mind—no, that iss not easy to do.”

He stood about for a minute or two, impatient, angry, and conscious that all his reasoning and arguments were of no avail.

“ I will go ofer to the curing-house,” said he, “ and hef a word with your father.”

“ Mr. MacDonald, you will hef the trouble for nothing. What will you do when Miss Sheila Mackenzie will not be aple to do anything? And it iss many a one in the fillage hass gone to

my father—and it iss always the same—he will hear no word of me ; and if they hef peen anxious and ferry anxious then he will get ferry angry, and they hef come away more afrait than effer. No, that iss no use, Mr. MacDonald, the going to my father at the curing-house.”

“Then it iss a last word I hef to say to you Moira,” said the minister in an altered tone, as he stepped forward and took her hand. “You are a good lass, and you are not willing to do harm to any one. It iss a great harm you are doing to Angus M’Eachran—ay, indeed, Moira, you hef goot cause to wonder—but that iss true, and it is a great harm you are doing to yourself. For if there iss no lightness in the house, a young man will not stay in the house, and if his wife iss always fretting and hass no laugh for him when he comes home, he will hef it in his heart not to come to the house at all, and that iss ferry pad for a young man. And you must try, Moira, to get rid of your fretting ; or you will be ferry

sorry one tay that you tit not get rid of your fretting. Now, good-bye, Moira ; and mind what I hef said to you this tay."

So the minister left, not in a very hopeful or happy mood. As he passed the house of John Fergus, he frowned ; and then he remembered that he had not checked Angus M'Eachran for using a certain phrase about John Fergus.

" Well, well," thought Mr. MacDonald, " it is no great matter ; and if I was Angus M'Eachran perhaps it is the same words I would be for using whether the minister was there or no."

## CHAPTER IX.

## IN THE DEEPS.

THINGS went from bad to worse, and that rapidly. Moira knew but little of what was going on, for the neighbours were slow to tell her. But every one in Ardtilleach was aware that Angus M'Eachran had sold his share in the boat to young Donald Neil; and that, while this ready money lasted, he had done no work at all, but merely lounged about until he could get hold of one or two companions to go off on a drinking frolic. Moira saw him go out each day; she did not know but that he was gone to the fishing. When he returned late at night, she sometimes saw that he had been having a glass, and she was a little perturbed. But Angus had a strong head; and he managed to conceal from her for a

long time the fashion in which he was spending his life.

He did not deliberately set to work to drink himself and his young wife out of house and home. He had fits of remorse, and always was about to turn over a new leaf—next day ; but the next came, and Moira was silent and sad, and then he would go out and get a cheerful word with some companions, and a glass. Moreover, the savings of a fisherman either increase or decrease ; they never stand still. When the motive was taken away for the steady addition to the little hoard in the bank at Stornoway, that fund itself was in danger. And at length it became known in Ardtilleach that Angus M'Eachran had squandered that also, and that now, if he wanted money, he must go into debt with one of the curers, and hire himself out for one of the curers' boats.

The appearance of the man altered too. He had been rather a smart young fellow, careful of



his clothes, and cleanly in his habits; now, as Moira noticed, he paid less attention to these things, and heeded her not when she remonstrated.

One night Angus M'Eachran came home, and staggered into the cottage. Moira regarded him with affright. He sate down on a wooden stool by the peat fire.

"Now there iss an end of it," said he gloomily.

"An end of what, Angus?" said she in great alarm.

"An end of you, and of me, and of Ardtilleach; and it iss not in Ardtilleach I can lif any more, but it iss to Glassgow that I am going."

"To Glassgow!" she cried.

"Ay," said he, "this iss no longer any place for me. I hef no share in the poat. I hef no money in the pank. It iss all gone away—in the tammed whisky—and it is not a farthing of



money I can get from any one—and what iss to become of you, Moira ? ”

She did not cry aloud, nor were her eyes wet with tears, but she sate with a white face, trying to comprehend the ruin that had befallen them.

“ It iss not the truth you are speaking, Angus M’Eachran ! ” she said somewhat wildly.

“ It iss the truth ass if it were spoken pefore Kott,” said he, “ and now you will hef something more to cry ofer. Well, I am sorry for you, Moira. It wass another thing I looked for when we were marriet ; but now it iss no use my living in Ardtilleach, and it iss to Glassgow I am going.”

Moira was rocking herself on the chair, and sobbing and moaning in her great grief. It was true, then. They were ruined ; and to whom could she turn for protection ? The friends who had come to her wedding were now away in London. As for her father, she might have thought of appealing to the rocks on the shore.

“Angus, Angus!” she cried, “you will stay in Ardtilleach! You will not go to Glassgow! It iss many another poat that will be glad to hef you, and there iss no one can mek so much at the fishing as you—”

“And what is the goot of it,” he said, “that a man will mek money, and hef to lif a hard life to mek money, and when he comes home, then it iss not like coming home to him at all? What I hef done that wass bad enough; what you have done, Moira Fergus, well it iss something of this that you hef done.”

She dared not answer—some strange consciousness oppressed her. She went away from him, and sate in a corner, and cried bitterly. He spoke no more to her that night.

Next morning he was in a very different humour; he was discontented, quarrelsome, and for the first time of their married life spoke rudely and tauntingly to her. The knowledge that he was now a beggar—that his neighbours

regarded him as an outcast—that his old companions in the boat were away at their work, leaving him a despicable idler to consort with the old men about—seemed to drive him to desperation. Hitherto he had always said, in answer to friendly remonstrances, that there were more fish in the sea than ever came out of it; and that by and by he would set to work again. Now it seemed to have occurred to him that his former companions were rather shy of him; and that he had a bad name throughout the island.

“Yes,” said he, angrily to her, “when I go to Glassgow, then you can go to your father, and you can ask him to tek you back to his house. It wass my house that wass not goot enough for you; and from the morning to the night it wass neffer a smile or a laugh wass on your face; and now when I will go away to Glassgow, you will be a great deal petter, ay, and ferry much petter, in the house of your father John Fergus—and tam him!”

She said not a word in reply, for her heart was full; but she put a shawl round her shoulders and walked away over to the curing-house, where her father was. Angus M'Eachran was mad with rage. Was she already taking him at his word; and seeking to return to her father's house? With a wild feeling of vengeance at his heart, he determined there and then to leave the place; and as he set out from Ardtilleach, without a word of good-bye to any one in it, the last thing that he saw was John Fergus coming out to the door of the curing-house to speak to Moira. With many an angry and silent imprecation, he strode along the rough road, and then he began to bethink himself how a penniless man was to make his way to distant Stornoway and to Glasgow.

The purpose of Moira Fergus was quite different from that which her husband had imagined.

"What will you want with me?" said her

father, coldly, when he came out in response to her message. "I hef told you, Moira Fergus, that it iss no word I hef for you. You hef gone to another house ; you will stay there—ay, if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years."

"It iss Angus M'Eachran," she said, with tears in her eyes, "and—and—he iss going away to Glassgow if he cannot go to the fishing—and—if you would speak a word to Mr. Maclean—"

"Ay, he iss going to Glassgow?" said John Fergus, with an angry flash in his eyes. "And the teffle only knows that he iss fit for nothing but the going to Glassgow. Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, and it wass a prout tay for you, the tay you were marriet to Angus M'Eachran ; but it iss not a prout tay any more, that you are married to a man that iss a peggar and a trunkard, and hass not a penny in ta whole world ; no it iss not any longer a prout tay for you that you married Angus M'Eachran !"



She would take no heed of these hard words ; her purpose to save her husband was too earnest.

“Ay, ay, that wass a bad day,” Moira said sadly, “and if I had known, I would not hef married Angus M’Eachran ; but now, father, it would be ferry kind of you to speak a word to Mr. Maclean—”

“For Angus M’Eachran ?” said the father, with a savage scowl ; “not if he wass to be tammed the morn’s morning !”

Moira shuddered—her last hope was slowly leaving her.

“You would not hef the neighbours,” she pleaded, “you would not hef the neighbours say you wass a hard man, father, and it iss not any one could say a word like yourself to Mr. Maclean ; and Mr. Maclean will know that Angus M’Eachran is a ferry goot fisherman and ferry cleffer with his hands, and if he would gif Angus a share in a poat, it would be ferry soon he would be paid back for that, for there iss not



any one in the island can make parrels like him—”

“ And it iss a foolish lass you are ! ” the father broke in impatiently, “ that you will come to me to speak to Mr. Maclean for Angus M’Eachran. Iss it any cause I hef to speak for Angus M’Eachran ? And ferry much I would hef to say for him, when the whole of Ardtilleach, and the whole of the islands will know of his trinking, and his trinking, and not any work, no more ass if he wass an old man or á rich man, and the money going from him until it iss not a penny of it that iss left ! ”

“ But—”

“ And there iss more, Moira Fergus,” continued her father vehemently. “ I will say to you many’s the time I hef no word for you—”

“ But only this once—”

“ Only this teffle ! I tell you to go away, Moira Fergus, and not to come pothering me with your Mr. Macleans and your Angus

M'Eachrans ! Let him go to the men that hass been trinking his whisky ! Let him go to the man who hass his share in the poat. But not to me !”

“Father—”

“I hef told you, Moira Fergus,” John Fergus said, recovering from his rage, “that it iss no word will pass petween us ; and this iss an end of it.”

With that he turned and went into the curing-house, slamming the door after him.

“And it iss a hard man you are,” said Moira sadly.

She walked back to her own little cottage, almost fearing that her husband might be inside. He was not ; so she entered, and sat down to contemplate the miserable future that lay before her, and to consider what she could do to induce Angus M'Eachran to remain in Ardtilleach, and take to the fishing and sober ways again.

First of all, she thought of writing to her

friends in London ; but Angus had the address, and she dared not ask him for it. Then she thought of making a pilgrimage all the way to Borva to beg of the great Mr. Mackenzie there to bring his influence to bear on her husband and on Mr. Maclean the curer, so that some arrangement might be made between them. But how could she, all by herself, make her way to Borva ? And where might Angus M'Eachran be by the time she came back ?

Meanwhile Angus was not about the village, nor yet out on the rocks, nor yet down in the little harbour ; so, with a sad heart enough, she prepared her frugal mid-day meal, and sate down to that by herself. She had no great desire for food, for she was crying most of the time.

Late that evening a neighbour came in, who said she had just returned from Harrabost.

“ Ay, Moira,” said she, “ and what is wrong now, that Angus M'Eachran will be for going away from Ardtilleach ? ”

Moira stared at her.

“I do not know what you mean, Mrs. Cameron,” she said.

“You do not know, then? You hef not heard the news, that Angus M’Eachran will be away to Glassgow?”

Moira started up with a quick cry. Her first thought was to rush out of the house to overtake him and turn him back; but how was that possible?

“Oh, Mrs. Cameron, what iss it you tell me this tay? And where tit you see Angus? And are you quite sure?”

“Well, well, Moira,” said the old woman, “it iss not any great matter the going to Glassgow; and if you will sit down now, I will tell you.”

The girl sate down, silently, and crossed her hands on her lap. There was no more crying now; the last blow had fallen, and despair had supervened.

“You know, Moira, my son that lifs round at

the pack of Harrabost, and I was ofer to see him, and all wass ferry well, and his wife hass got ferry well through her trouple. And when I wass for coming away, it wass Angus M'Eachran will come running up to the house, and ferry wild he wass in the look of him. 'Duncan Cameron,' says he, 'will you gif me your poat for two minutes or for three minutes, for I am told that this is the M'Alister's poat that iss coming along, and they are going to Taransay.' You know the M'Alister's poat, Moira, that they pought at Styornoway ? "

Moira nodded assent.

" Well, you know, Moira, that Duncan was always a good frient to Angus M'Eachran ; and he said, ' Yes, Angus M'Eachran, you may hef the poat, and she is down at the shore, and you can run her out yourself, for the oars and the thole-pins are in her.' But Angus M'Eachran, he says, ' Duncan, you will come with me to pring pack the boat, for I will ask the M'Alisters



to tek me with them to Taransay ; for it iss to Taransay I am going.’ ”

“ Ay, to Taransay ! ” said Moira eagerly. “ And it was only to Taransay ? ”

“ I will tell you that, Moira,” the old woman continued, who would narrate her story in her own way. “ Well, well, I went to him, and I said, ‘ What iss it that takes you to Taransay, Angus M’Eachran, and when will you be coming pack from Taransay ? ’ ‘ Mrs. Cameron,’ says he, ‘ I do not know when I will be coming pack from Taransay, for it iss to Glassgow I am going ; and it iss perhaps that I will neffer see Ardtilleach any more.’ ”

“ No, no, no,” the girl moaned ; “ he did not say that, Mrs. Cameron ! ”

“ And I said to him, ‘ It iss a foolish man you are, Angus M’Eachran, to speak such things, and you with a young wife in Ardtilleach.’ ‘ Ay,’ said he, ‘ Mrs. Cameron, and if there wass no young wife, it iss perhaps that I would be in



Ardtilleach now, and hef my money, and the share in the poat; but it iss a pad tay the tay that a young man marries a lass that is tiscontented and hass no heart in the house, and that iss it that I am going away from Ardtilleach; and Moira—well, Moira hass her father in Ardtilleach.’ Ay, that iss what he said to me, Moira, ass Duncan and him they were putting out the poat from the shore.”

“My father!” the girl murmured, “I hef not any father now—no, and not any husband—it iss the two that I hef lost. Ay, and Angus M’Eachran hass gone away to Glassgow.”

There was no bitter wailing and lamentation; only the hands in her lap were more tightly clenched. The red peats flickered up in the dusk; and her face seemed drawn and haggard.

“Ay, and they pulled out to the M’Alister’s poat when she came by, and I wass looking at them all the time from the shore, and Angus M’Eachran, when the M’Alisters put their poat

apout, he got apoard of her, and there wass not much talking petween them. And Duncan, I could hear him cry out, ‘Good-pye to you this tay, Angus M’Eachran!’ And Angus he cried out, ‘Goot-pye to you, Duncan Cameron.’ And when Duncan he came back to the shore, he will tell me that the M’Alisters were going down to the ferry pig boat that iss at Taransay, and that hass come round from Lochnamaddy, and Angus M’Eachran he wass saying he would know some of the sailors in her, and the captain would tek him to Glassgow if he worked the passage. Ay, ay, Moira, I can see it iss not the good news I hef prought to you this night; and it is a pad thing for a young lass when her husband goes away to Glassgow; but you do not know yet that he will stay in Glassgow, and you will write a line to him, Moira—”

“How can I write a line to him, Mrs. Cameron?” the girl said; “there iss more people in Glassgow ass their iss in Styornoway, and

the Lewis, and Harris all put together ; and how will they know which of them iss Angus M'Eachran ? ”

“ Then you will send the letter to Styornoway, and you will gif it to the captain of the great poat, the *Clansman* ; and iss there any one in Glassgow that he will not know ? ”

“ A letter,” Moira said wistfully. “ There iss no letter that will bring Angus M'Eachran pack, not now that he hass gone away from Ardtileach. And I will say good-night to you now, Mrs. Cameron. It iss a little tired I am.”

“ You are not ferry well the night, Moira,” said the old woman, looking at her, “ I do not know that I will leaf you by yourself the night.”

“ But I will ferry much rather be by myself, Mrs. Cameron—ay, ay, I hef many things to think ofer ; and it iss in the morning I will come to see you, Mrs. Cameron, for I am thinking of going to Glassgow.”

“Ay, you will come to me in the morning, like a good lass,” said Mrs. Cameron, “and then you will think no more of going to Glassgow, which would be a foolish thing for a young lass, and it iss not yet, no, nor to-morrow, nor any time we will let you do such a foolish thing, and go away from Ardtilleach.”

## CHAPTER X.

## A PROCLAMATION.

MOIRA did not go to Glasgow ; she remained by herself in Ardtilleach, in the small cottage all by herself, whither one or two of the neighbours, having a great pity for her condition, came to her, and occasionally brought her a little present of tea or sugar. How she managed to live at all, no one knew ; but she was very proud, and maintained to those who visited her that she was well off and content. She was very clever with her needle, and in this way requited her friends for any little kindness they showed her.

So the days and the weeks went by, and nothing was heard of Angus M'Eachran. Mr.

MacDonald made inquiries of the men who had gone with him to Taransay ; and they said he had undertaken to work his passage to Glasgow in a boat that was going round the island for salt-fish. That was all they knew.

Well, Mr. MacDonald was not a rich man, and he had a small house ; but his heart was touched by the mute misery of this poor lass who was living in the cottage all by herself, as one widowed, or an outcast from her neighbours. So he went to her and asked her to come over to the manse and stay there until something should be heard of her husband.

“It is a ferry good man you are, Mr. MacDonald,” she said, “and a ferry kind man you hef been, always and now too, to me ; but I cannot go with you to the manse.”

“Kott pless me !” he cried impatiently. “How can you lif all by yourself ? It iss not goot for a young lass to lif all by herself.”

“Ay, ay, Mr. MacDonald, and sometimes it is



ferry goot ; for she will begin to go back ofer what hass passed, and she will know where she wass wrong, and if there iss punishment for that, she will take the punishment to herself."

"And where should the punishment be coming," said he warmly, "if not to the young man who would go away to Glassgow and leaf a young wife without money, without anything, after he has trank all the money ?"

"You do not know—you do not know, Mr. MacDonald," she said sadly, and shaking her head. Then she added, almost wildly, "Ay, Mr. MacDonald, and you hef no word against the young wife that will trife her husband into the trinking, and trife him away from his own house and the place he was porn, and all his frients, and the poat that he had, and will trife him away to Glassgow—and you hef no word against that, Mr. MacDonald ?"

"Well, it iss all ofer, Moira," said he gently. "And what iss the use now of your lifing here

by yourself; and when your peats are finished, who will go out and cut the peats for you?"

"I can cut the peats for myself, Mr. MacDonald," said she simply; "and it iss one or two of the neighbours they will cut some peats for me, for on the warm tays it iss little I hef to do, and I can go out and turn their peats for them."

"You will be better ofer at the manse, Moira."

"It iss ferry kind you are, Mr. Macdonald; but I will not go ofer to the manse."

In his dire perplexity Mr. MacDonald went away back to the manse, and spent a portion of the evening in writing a long and beautifully-worded letter to Mrs. Lavender, the young married lady who had been present at Moira's wedding, and who was now in London. If Mr. MacDonald's spoken English was peculiar in pronunciation, his written English was accurate enough; and to add a grace to it, and show that

he was not merely an undisciplined islander, he introduced into it a scrap or two of Latin. He treated the story of Moira and her husband from a high literary point of view. He invited the attention of the great lady in London to this incident in the humble annals of the poor. She would doubtless remember, amid the gaities of the world of fashion, and in the thousand distractions of the vast metropolis, the simple ceremony of which she had been a spectator in the distant islands, which, if they were not the *nitentes Cycladas* of the Roman bard—and so forth. Mr. MacDonald was proud of this composition. He sealed it up with great care, and addressed it to “The Hon. Mrs. Lavender,” at her house in London.

An answer came with surprising swiftness. Mr. MacDonald was besought to convoy Moira forthwith to the island of Borva, where the wife of Mr. Mackenzie’s keeper would give her something to do about Mrs. Lavender’s house. Mr.

and Mrs. Lavender would be back in the Hebrides in about three weeks. If the rains had been heavy, Moira was to keep fires in all the rooms of the house, especially the bed-rooms, incessantly. And Mrs. Lavender charged Mr. MacDonald with the fulfilment of these her commands. He was in no wise to fail to have Moira M'Eachran removed from her solitary cottage to the spacious house at Borva.

The minister was a proud man the day he went over to Ardtilleach with this warrant in his hand. Would Moira withstand him now? Indeed the girl yielded to all this show of authority, and humbly, and gratefully, and silently she set to work to put together the few things she possessed, so that she might leave the village in which she was born. Indeed, she went away from Ardtilleach with little regret. Her life there had not been happy. She went round to a few of the cottages, to bid good-bye to her neighbours; and when it became known to John

Fergus that his daughter was going away to Borva, he instantly departed for Killeena, on some mission or another, and remained there the whole day, so that she should not see him before leaving.

She remained a couple of days at the manse, waiting for a boat, and then, when the chance served, the minister himself went with her to Borva, and took her up to the house of Mr. Mackenzie, who was called the king of that island. After a few friendly words from the great man—who then took Mr. MacDonald away with him, that they might have a talk over the designs of Prussia, the new bridge on the road to the Butt of Lewis, and other matters of great public importance—Moirá was handed over to the keeper's wife, who was housekeeper there. She did not know what she had done to be received with so much friendliness and kindness; she was not aware, indeed, that a letter from London had preceded her arrival.



She slept in Mr. Mackenzie's house, and she had her meals there, but most of the day she spent in the empty house to which Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were shortly coming. What she could do in the way of preparing the place for their reception, she did right willingly. There was never a more devoted servant; and her gratitude towards those who befriended her was on many occasions too much for her English—she had to escape from its constraint into the Gaelic.

Then there was a great stir throughout the island, for every one knew that Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were on their way from London; and the wonderful waggonette—which was in effect a boat placed on wheels, with oars and everything complete—that Mr. Lavender had built for himself, was, one morning, taken down Loch Roag, and landed at Callernish, and driven across to Stornoway. The *Clansman* was coming in that day.



It was in the dusk of the evening that the party from London—there were one or two strangers—arrived in the little bay underneath Mrs. Lavender's house, and walked up the steep incline, the luggage following on the shoulders of the sailors. And the very first words that Mrs. Lavender uttered on entering the house were—

“Where is Moira Fergus?”

The girl was greatly afraid to find herself in the presence of all these people; and Mrs. Lavender, seeing that, quickly took her aside into a room where they were by themselves. Moira was crying.

“And you have not heard anything more of him, Moira?” she asked.

“No, I hev heard no word at all,” the girl said, “and I do not look for that now, not any more. I hef lost effery one now, both my father and my husband, and it iss myself that hass done it; and when I think of it all, I will say to

myself that neffer any one wass alive that hass done as I hef done—”

“No, no, no, Moira,” her friend said. “It is not so bad as that. Mr. MacDonald wrote to me that you fretted a great deal, and that Angus was very impatient, and he does not know what made him go away to Glasgow, for how could that make it any better? But we will find him for you, Moira.”

“You will find him,” the girl said sadly; “and what if you will find him? He will neffer come back to Ardtilleach. You do not know all about it, Mrs Laffenter—no, I am sure Mr. MacDonald is a ferry kind man, and he would not tell you all about it. And this is why Angus M’Eachran will go away to Glassgow—that he had trank all the money there wass in the bank at Styornoway, and he had no more a share in the poat, and he wass ashamed to go apout Ardtilleach. And all that was my doing—indeed it wass—”

“ Well, well, you must give up fretting about it, Moira, and we will get Angus back to Ardtilleach or back to Borva—”

“ But you do not know, Mrs. Laffenter,” the girl said, in an excited and despairing way ; “ you do not know the harm that wass done to Angus M’Eachran ! And will he effer get back from that—from the trinking, and the trinking, and I myself with very little thought of it at Ardtilleach ? And where is he now ? And what iss he doing ? It wass no more care for his life that he had when he went away from Ardtilleach ! ”

“ Well, well, Moira,” said her friend soothingly, “ if you were to blame for part of it all, you have suffered a great deal ; and so has he, for it is not a happy thing for a man to go away from a young wife, and go away among strangers, without any friend, or occupation, or money. You seem to have got into a bad plight at Ardtilleach—perhaps it was better to have it

broken up like that. It was certainly a great pity that you did not discover all you know now before things came to their worst ; but if they are at their worst, they must mend, you know. So you must not give up hope just yet."

Moira suddenly recollected herself.

"I am keeping you from your frients, Mrs. Laffenter," said she ; "and it iss ferry kind of you, but I do not wish that you will be troupled apout me and Angus M'Eachran. And I hef not thanked you for sending me here ; and I do not know how to do that ; but it iss not bekass I hef no feeling apout it that I cannot thank you, Mrs. Laffenter."

She was a servant in the house ; she would not shake hands with Mrs. Lavender. But her mistress took her hand, and said, with a great kindness in her face,—

"I will say good night to you now, Moira, for I may not see you again to-night. And

to-morrow morning, you will come to me, and I will tell you what can be done about Angus M'Eachran."

That evening, after dinner, Mrs. Lavender told the story to her guests from London; and she was obviously greatly distressed about it; but her husband said,—

"The young fellow had no money; he is bound to be in Glasgow. We can easily get at him by advertising in the papers; and if you can persuade him to come to Borva, we shall have plenty of work for him, for he is a clever carpenter. But if he has enlisted—"

"I propose," said one of the guests, a young American lady, recently married, "I propose that, if he has enlisted, we who are here now subscribe to buy him out."

Her husband, a less impulsive and more practical person, got a piece of paper, and wrote these words on it :—

*Should this meet the eye of Angus M'Eachran, of Ardtilleach, in the island of Darroch, he will hear of something to his advantage by communicating at once with Mrs. Lavender, Sea-view, island of Borru, Hebrides.*



## CHAPTER XI.

## A PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS.

It would have been strange indeed, if Angus M'Eachran had missed seeing this advertisement, for it was in all the Glasgow newspapers, morning after morning. It happened that, late one night, he was in a miserable little public-house near the Broomielaw, with two or three companions. He was now a very different man from the smart young fisherman who had lived at Ardtilleach. The ravages of drink were everywhere visible, in his face, in his shabby dress, in his trembling hand. He was at the moment sullen and silent, though his companions, who were Highlanders employed about the harbour, were talking excitedly enough, in their native tongue.

M'Eachran had also got occasional work about the ships ; but he stuck to it only until he had earned a few shillings, and then he went off on a fresh drinking-bout. There were always plenty of "loafers" about to join him ; he became a familiar figure in all the small public-houses about ; and in garrulous moments he had told his companions something of his history, so that both himself and the circumstances of his leaving his native place were widely known.

On this evening the landlord of the public-house came into the den in which the Highland-men were drinking, and said, pointing to a portion of the newspaper he held in his hands,—

"Is this no you, M'Eachran?"

Angus M'Eachran took the newspaper, and read the lines pointed out.

"Ay, it iss me," he said gloomily.

"Man, there's something there for ye!" the publican said. "Canna ye read it? They've

gotten some money for ye, as sure as ye're a leevin sinner ! ”

“ It iss no money they hef for me,” said M'Eachran ; “ it is these ferry grand people, and they will want me to go pack to Ardtilleach. No, I haf had enough, and plenty, and more as that of Ardtilleach. The teffle will tek the tay that I go pack to Ardtilleach ! ”

“ Ye're a fulish cratur, man. Do ye think they wud gang to the awfu' expense o' advertisin' in the newspapers if there wasna something gran' waitin' for ye ? ”

“ Go and tam you, John Jameson, and go and pring me another mutchkin of your pad whisky, that iss not fit to be put before swines.”

The landlord did not care to quarrel with a good customer. He went off to get the whisky, merely saying, in an under-tone,—

“ They Hielanmen, they've nae mair manners than a stot ; but they're the deevils to swallow whisky.”

He took no notice of the advertisement ; he did not even care to speculate on what it might mean. Had Angus M'Eachran parted from his wife merely through some fierce quarrel, and had he resolved to go to Glasgow merely as a measure of revenge, the prospect of a reconciliation might have been welcome. But it was not so. He had left Ardtilleach simply out of sheer despair. He had drunk all his money ; he had disgraced himself in the eyes of his neighbours ; he had long ago abandoned any notion of having any real companionship with his wife. Besides, by this time he had acquired the drunkard's craving ; and in Glasgow, provided he could get any sort of work, he would be able to do as he pleased with his money. When he got to Glasgow, he abandoned himself to drinking without any remorse. His chances in life were gone ; there remained but this. He had no boat, no home, no relatives ; his society was in the public-house ; the one enjoyable experience

of the day was the sensation of beatific stupor rising into his head after drinking repeated doses of whisky. If he was ill and surly next morning, there was but little sense of shame mingled with his moods. Nor did he consider himself a very ill-used person, whose wrongs ought to excite compassion. He simply was what he was, as the natural result of what had gone before ; and he looked neither to the past nor to the future. It was enough if he had the wherewithal in his pocket to pay for another dram ; and he did not care to ask whether, in the bygone time, he was the injuring or the injured party.

But it became more difficult for him to get those odd jobs about the quays, for his unsteady habits were notorious, and no one could depend on his remaining sober for a single day. He became shabbier and shabbier in appearance ; and now the winter was coming on, and many a day he shivered with the cold as he walked aimlessly about the streets. When he could get



no work, and when he had no money with which to go into a public-house, he would often wander idly along the inner thoroughfares of the town, perhaps with some vague hope of meeting an acquaintance who would give him a glass. He was not afraid of meeting any of his old friends from Ardtilleach ; they could not have recognised him.

One night he was going up Candleriggs Street in this aimless fashion, and a bitterly cold night it was. A north-east wind was blowing down the thoroughfares, driving a stinging sleet before it ; even the hardiest were glad to escape indoors from such weather. Angus M'Eachran was not proof against cold and wet as he had been in former days. He shivered like a reed in the wind ; his limbs were chilled ; if he had not been in the semi-bemused state of the confirmed drunkard he would have crept back to his miserable lodging. As it was, his only thought at the moment was to get a little shelter from the bitter wind.



He came to the entrance into the City Hall, and here was an open space, the light of which promised something of warmth. There were a great many people going in ; and “ Free Admission ” stared every one in the face. M’Eachran crept into a corner, glad to be out of the cold for a moment.

The mere going by of the people seemed to have a fascination for him. His head was dazed. When a friendly old gentleman in passing said, “ Weel, ma man, are ye no comin’ in ? I dinna think you could do better,” he answered vaguely, “ Yes,” and joined the stream. There was a great crush ; he was borne into the hall. So dense was the crowd that no one seemed to notice his shabby clothes. He got no seat, but he was well propped up ; and the heat of the great assembly began to thaw his frozen limbs.

And who was this maniac and mountebank on the platform—this short, stout, ungainly man,

with lank yellow hair, prominent front teeth, and exceedingly long arms which he flung about as he stamped up and down and ranted? Truly, he was a ridiculous-looking person; and it was no wonder that highly cultivated people, who read the reviews, and went into mild frenzy over blue and white china, and were agitated about the eastern position, should refuse to go and hear this stump-orator who was lecturing on temperance all over the country. The stories told of his *ad captandum* vulgarity and his irreverence were shocking. Jokes were made about the wild fashion in which he dealt with his *h*'s; although, being a Yorkshireman of inferior education, he never added an *h*, he simply ignored the letter altogether, and was profoundly unconscious of doing so. He spoke with a strong north-country accent; he marched up and down the platform, with perspiration on his unlovely face; he sawed the air with his arms, and was by turns angry with a screeching

anger and pathetic with a theatrical effusiveness. A person of refined taste could not approve of Mr. Robert J. Davis and his oratory. The exhibition was altogether too absurd. And yet there are in this country at present thousands of human beings whom this man rescued from ruin; there are thousands of homes which he restored to peace and happiness, after that seemed impossible; there are thousands of women who cannot utter that commonplace name without tears of gratitude. And these people never thought the less of R. J. Davis because he ill-treated the letter *h*.

“Yes, my friends,” this uncouth creature was saying, or rather bawling, “you see that miserable drunkard crawling along the street, dirt on his clothes, idiocy in his face, his eyes turned away for shame—and you despise him—and are you not right in despising him? Perhaps you don’t know. Well, I’ll tell you. That skulking creature, that reptile of the gutter, was once the

heir of all the ages ; and when he was born he came into a wonderful heritage that had been stored up for him through centuries and centuries. Great statesmen had spent their lives in making laws for him ; patriots had shed their blood for him ; men of science had made bridges, and railways, and steamships for him ; discoverers and great merchants had gone over all the earth, and there was sugar coming from one place, and cotton from another, and tea from another—from all parts of the world these things were coming. And for all this, and for far more than that, what was expected of him ?—only that he should grow up a respectable citizen, and enjoy the freedom and the laws that his forefathers fought for, and do his duty towards God, and the State, and the friends whose anxious care had guided him through all the perils of childhood. What was his gratitude ? What has he done ?—what but throw shame on the name of the mother who bore him, making

himself a curse to society and a disgrace to friends who now avoid him. Has he a wife?—think of her! Has he children?—think of them! Good God, think of the young girl going away from her father's home, and trusting all her life to this new guidance, and looking forward to the years of old age, and the gentle going out of an honourable and peaceful life. And this is the guidance—this is the protection—that she sits up in the night-time, with her eyes red with weeping, and she listens for the drunken stagger of an inhuman ruffian, and she prays that God would in his mercy send some swift disease upon her, and hurry her out of her grief and her shame. That is the return that the drunkard makes for all the love and care that have been lavished on him—and you despise him—yes, he despises himself as he crawls along the pavement—his home broken up and ruined, his wife and children sent shivering to the almshouse—”



There was a sharp, quick cry at this moment ; and the lecturer stopped. The people near Angus M'Eachran turned round ; and there was the young fisherman, with his eyes fixed and glazed, and his arm uplifted as if appealing to the lecturer.

"The man is mad," said one ; "take him out."

But they could not take him out, for the crowd was too dense ; but as some one at the door seemed to have fancied that a woman had fainted, a tumbler of water was fetched and quickly handed over. M'Eachran drank some of the water.

"No," said he, seeing they were trying to make way for him ; "I am for staying here."

And there he did stay until the end of the lecture, which was not a long one. But that was only part of the evening's proceedings. Winding up with a passionate appeal to the people before him to come forward and sign the



abstention pledge—for the sake of their friends, if not of themselves—the lecturer stepped down to a space in front of the platform which had been kept clear, and there opened two large volumes which were placed on a narrow wooden table.

The people began to pour out of the various doorways; those who wished to stay and put down their names were gradually left behind. Among the latter was a young man who kept in the background, and was about the very last to sign; when he went up to the table his face was pale, his lips quite firm, his hand tremulous. This was what he wrote:—"Name, *Angus M'Eachran*; age, 24; occupation, *fisherman*; born, *island of Darrock*; resides, *Glasgow*." Mr. R. J. Davis looked at this young man rather curiously—perhaps only guessing, but not quite knowing what he had done that night.

## CHAPTER XII.

## AFTER MANY DAYS.

It was a terrible struggle. The thirst for drink had a grip of him that was an incessant torture : then there was the crushing difficulty of obtaining work for a man of his appearance. First of all, he left Glasgow and his associates there ; and went to Greenock—the fare by the steamboat was only sixpence. He went down to the quays there, and hung about ; and at last his Highland tongue won him the favour of the captain of a small vessel that was being repaired in dock. He got M'Eachran some little bit of work to do ; and the first thing to which the young man devoted his earnings was the purchase of some second-hand clothes. He was

now in a better position to go and ask for work.

If a man can keep sober in Greenock, which is one of the most dingy and rainy towns in this or any other country, he will keep sober anywhere. Not only did M'Eachran keep sober; but his sobriety, his industry, and his versatility—in Darroch he was famous for being able to turn his hand to anything—were speedily recognized by the foreman, and ended by his securing permanent employment. Then wages were high—such wages as had never been heard of in the Hebrides; and his wants were few. It was a strange thing to see the dogged industry of the Norseman fight with the impatience of the Celt; all day he would patiently and diligently get through his work, and then at night he would fret and vex his heart because he could not accomplish impossibilities. Nevertheless his companions knew that Angus M'Eachran was amassing money; for he earned much and spent little.

Time went by ; he heard no news from Darroch or Killeena ; and yet he would not write. Not only had he no hope of living again with Moira, but he had no wish for it. The recollection of bygone times was too gloomy. It was for quite another purpose that he was working hard and saving money.

One evening, going home from his work, and almost at the threshold of his own lodgings, he ran against a withered old Highlander named Connill, who was an under-keeper in Harris, and was acquainted with some of the Darroch people.

“Kott pless me, iss it you, Angus M’Eachran ?” the old man cried. “Ay, it iss many a tay since I will see you. And now you will come and hef a tram and a word or two together.”

“If you will come into the house, Duncan Connill,” said Angus, “and we are just at the house, I will gif you a tram ; but I hef not touched the whisky myself not for more ass

fourteen months I pelief. And are you ferry well, Duncan Connill ; and when wass you ofer in Darroch ? ”

They went into the younger man’s lodgings, and in front of the cheerful fire they had a chat together, and M’Eachran told his old acquaintance all that had recently happened to him.

“ And now you will go pack to Darroch,” said the old Highlandman. “ Ay, and it iss ferry prout Moira Fergus will be to see you looking so well, and hafing such good clothes, and more ass two pound fife a week.”

“ Well, I am not going pack to Darroch, and, yes, I am going pack to Darroch,” said Angus ; “ but it iss not to stay in Darroch that I am going pack. Moira she will be with her father ; and I will not tek her away from her father— it wass enough there wass of that pefore ; but I will mek the arranchement to gif her some money from one week to the next week, ass a man would gif his wife, and then I will come



pack to Greenock, and she will stay with John Fergus—and tam John Fergus ! ”

“ Ay, ay,” said the old Highlandman, “ and that iss ferry well said, Angus M’Eachran ; and if the lass will stay with her father, in the name of Kott let her stay with her father !—but if I wass you, Angus M’Eachran, it iss not much of the money I would gif a lass that would stay with her father, and her a marriet wife—no, I would not gif her much of the money, Angus.”

“ Well,” said Angus, “ it iss more ass fourteen months or eighteen months that I hef giffen her no money at all.”

“ And I was thinking,” said Duncan Connill, “ that it wass many the tay since I hef been to Darroch ; but when I wass there, it wass said that Moira wass away ofer at Borva, with Mr. Mackenzie’s daughter, that was marriet to an Englishman—”

“ Ay, ay,” said Angus, “ she wass a goot frient to Moira and to me ; and if she would tek



Moira away for a time to Borva, that wass a great kindness too ; but you do not think, Duncan Connill, she will always stay at Borva, and her always thinking of John Fergus ? But when she hass the money of her own, then she will do what she likes to do, even although she iss in the house of John Fergus."

"And when will you think of coming to Darroch, Angus ?"

"I do not know that, Duncan Connill. We are ferry pusy just now, and all the yard working ofertime, and ferry good wages. But it iss not ferry long before I will come to Darroch ; and if you would send me a line to tell me of the people there—what you can hear of them in Styornoway—it would be a kind thing to do, Duncan Connill."

And so the old man took back Angus M'Eachran's address to the Hebrides ; and began to noise it abroad that Angus was making a great deal of money in Greenock ; and that he

had a notion of coming some day to Stornoway, and of getting into business there as a builder of boats.

About three weeks after Duncan Connill had seen Angus M'Eachran, a young girl timidly tapped at the door of Angus's lodgings, and asked the landlady if he was inside.

"No, he's no," said the woman sulkily ; for landladies who have good lodgers do not like their being called upon by young women. The good lodgers are apt to marry and go away.

"When will he be in?" said the girl.

"I dinna ken."

So she turned away, and went out into the dismal streets of Greenock, over which there gloomed a grey and smoky twilight. She had not gone far when she suddenly darted forward, and caught a man by the hand, and looked up into his face.

"Angus !"

"Ay, iss it you, Moira Fergus?" said he

coldly, and drawing back. "And what hef you come for to Greenock?"

"It wass to see you, Angus M'Eachran—but not that you will speak to me like that," said the girl, beginning to cry.

"And who iss with you?" said he, not moved in the least by her tears.

"There iss no one with me," she said passionately; "and there wass no one with me all the way from Styornoway; and when Duncan Connill will tell me you wass in Greenock, I will say to him, 'I am going to see Angus M'Eachran; and I do not know what he will say to me; but I hef something to say to him.' And it is this, Angus, that I wass a bad wife to you, and it iss many's the night I hef cried apout it since you wass away, from the night to the morning; and now that I hef been away from Darroch for more ass a year, it iss not any more to Darroch I would be for going—no, nor to Borva, nor to Styornoway—but where you are, Angus, if you

will tek me—and where you will go I will go too—if that iss your wish, Angus M'Eachran."

She stood there, mutely awaiting his decision, and trying to restrain her tears.

"Moira," said he, "come into the house. It iss a great thing you hef told me this tay; and it iss ferry sorry I am that I tit not hear of it pefore. But there iss many a tay that iss yet to come, Moira."

These two went into Angus M'Eachran's lodgings; and the landlady was more civil when something of Moira's story was told her; and the young wife—with trembling hands and tearful eyes, but with a great and silent joy at her heart—sate down to the little tea-table on which Angus's evening meal was laid. That was not a sumptuous banquet; but there was no happier meeting anywhere in the world that night than the meeting of these two simple Highland folks. And here the story of Moira Fergus, and of her marriage with Angus M'Eachran, may fitly end.

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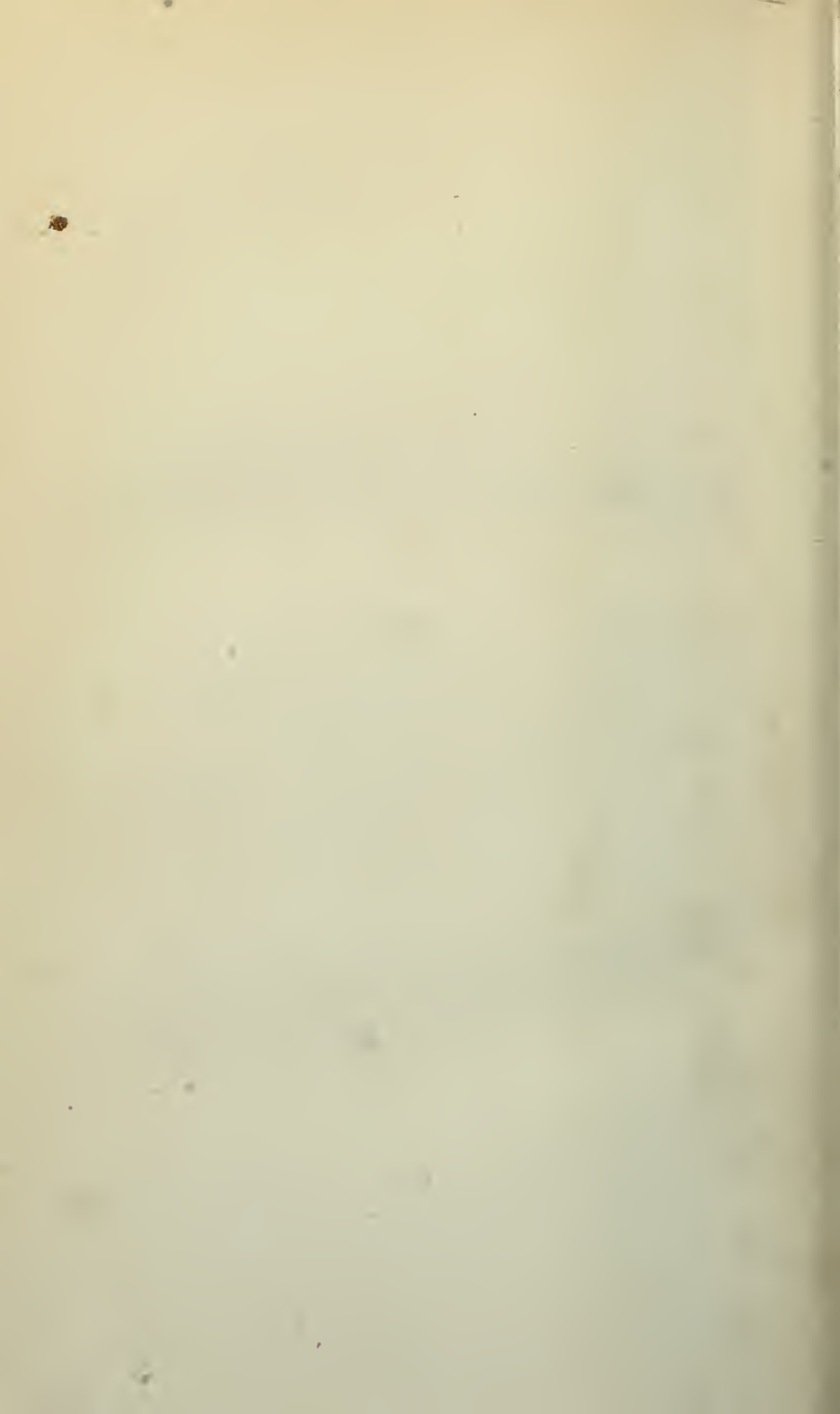
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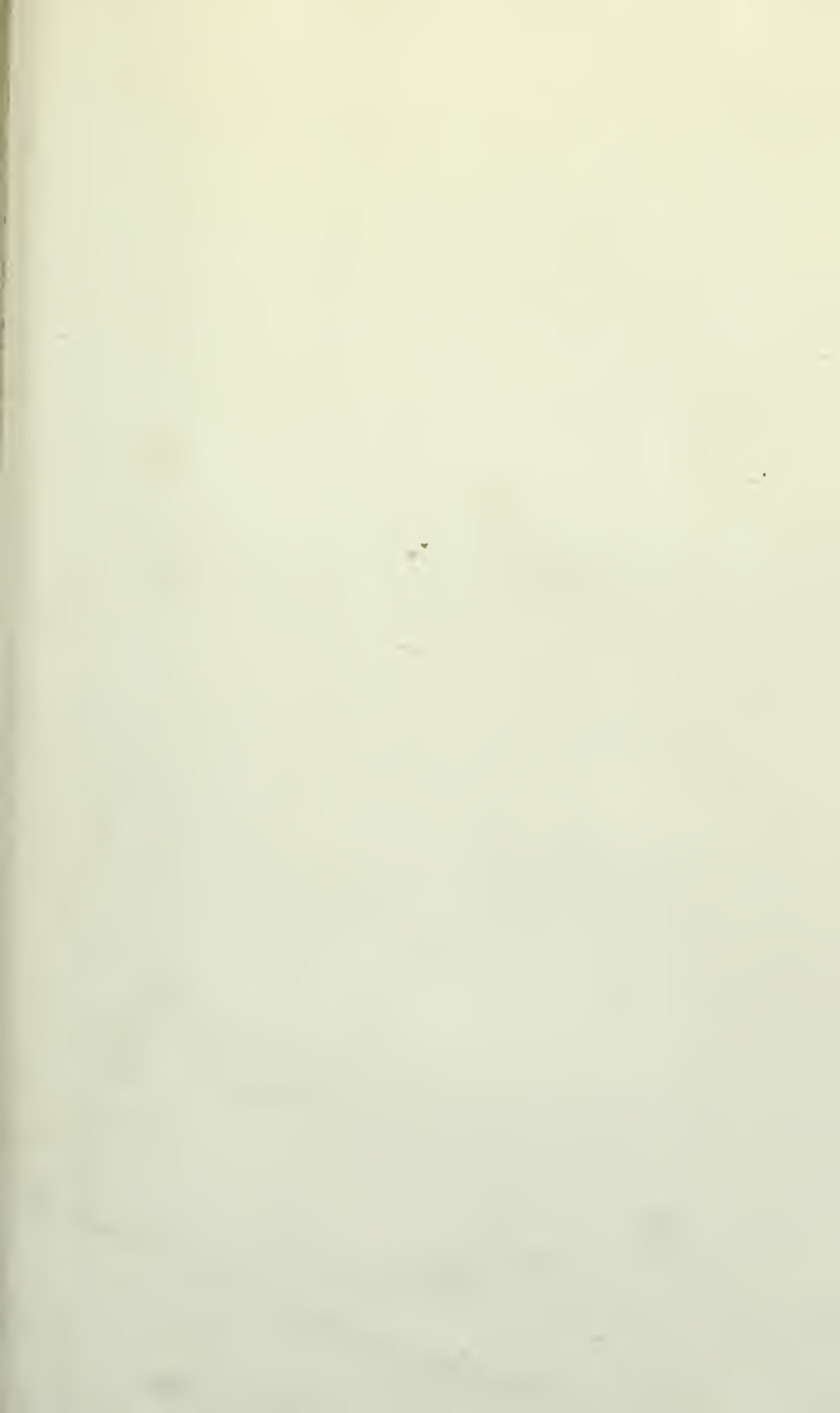
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